THE KING'S GOVERNMENT

A STUDY OF THE GROWTH OF THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

BY

R. H. GRETTON

FORMERLY DEMY OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

AUTHOR OF

"A MODERN HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE"





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INTRODUCTION

THE history of the Departments of Government, though inevitably affected at certain points by the main current of English history, provides nevertheless a subject not unsuitable for treatment by itself. Moreover, the light thus thrown from an angle, as it were, upon the main current illuminates it by emphasising certain tendencies of our constitutional history and the particular character of our national development.

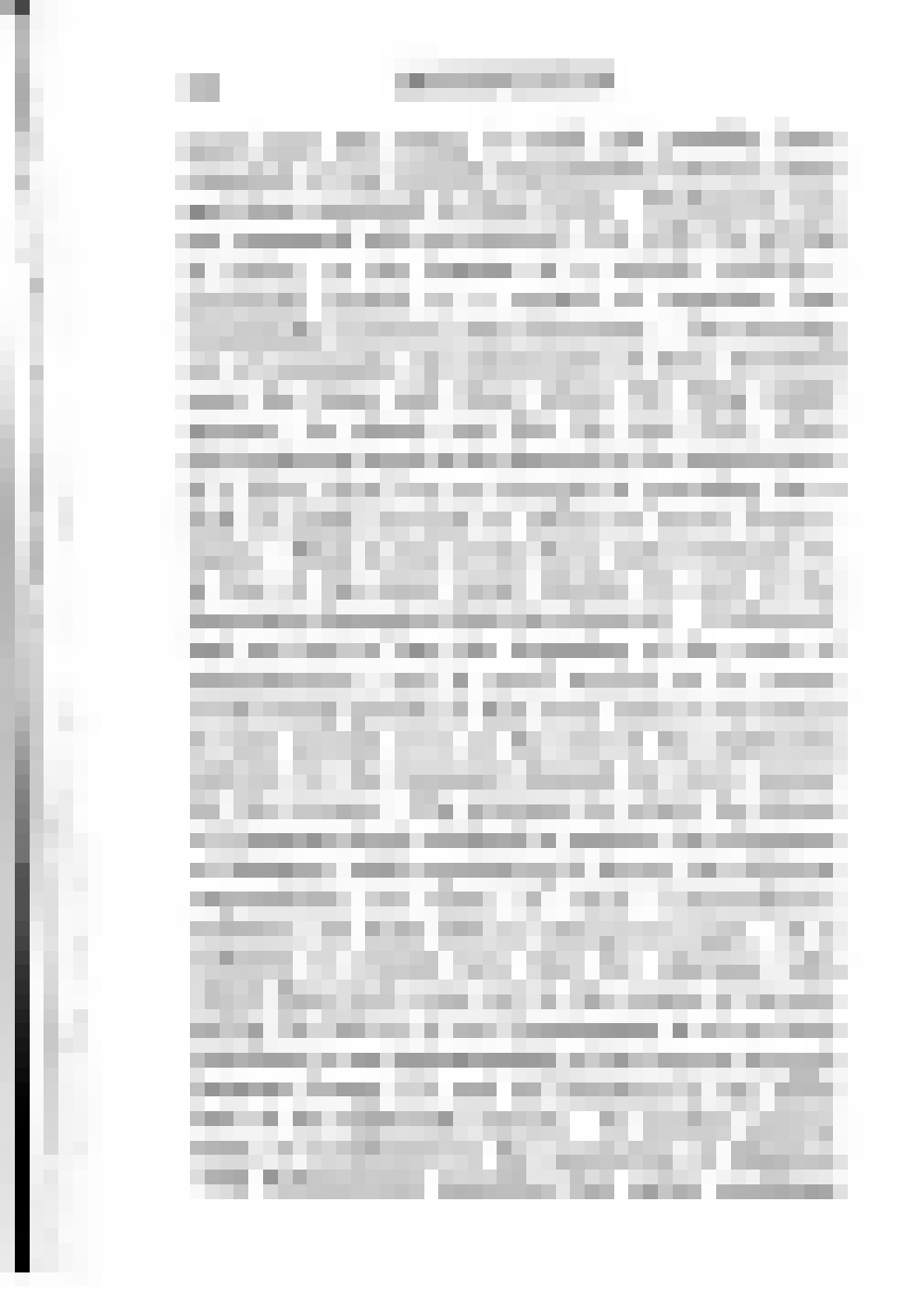
For instance, the Government Departments kept in active operation almost to our own day the principle that officials charged with the work of government are personal servants of the King. Theoretically they are so now; but until the end of the eighteenth century they received their pay as officials of the Royal Household; their office premises were still considered to be "lodgings out of Court," for the convenience of business grown too large to be transacted with comfort under the Court roofs. The following pages will show how naturally and inevitably this had come about. Before a Parliament existed there had had to be an Administration; and only the Royal Household could provide enough men to carry on the necessary operations, of receiving and checking the revenue, issuing commissions, registering fines and inquisitions, superintending the King's estates, and performing all the mechanical work of writing and sealing the various instruments by which the King's commands were conveyed. When Parlia-

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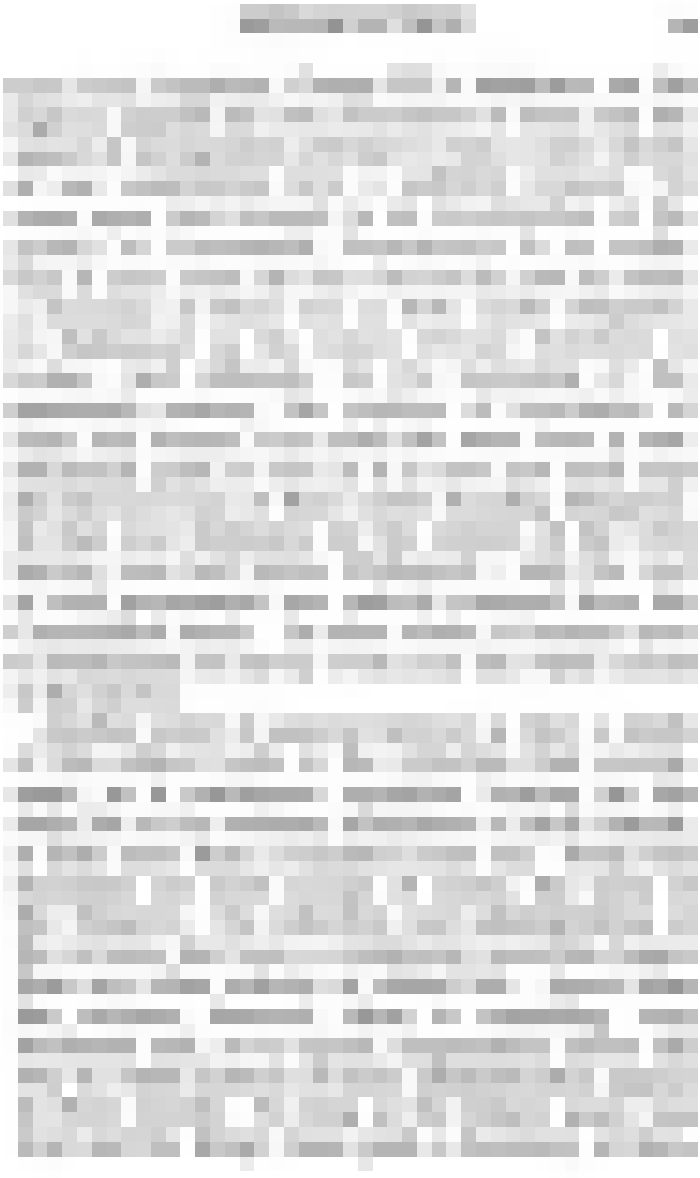
ment came into being, it could not possibly have conceived of any mutual responsibility between itself and those employed in these tasks. Parliament was not concerned with government, but with the giving of advice, or the exercise of a certain control,—practically limited to a control of taxation, but occasionally exerted in other directions. The carrying out of commands, the enforcement of laws, devolved upon the King, and those whom the King might appoint. So clearly was this the case that, when first legislation began to be directed to the maintenance of a navy, there was no thought of providing for a staff of public servants to attend to naval requirements. What is true of the Navy under Richard II. is true of the Army under Charles II., and of the Secretaries throughout their development. Parliament had not had to face the beginning of the work of administration; and it never seemed to be aware of the steady growth of that work until it was forced to take account of it, at the end of the eighteenth century, by the incessant demand for more money for the revenue. The processes by which the House of Commons slowly obtained in practice the allegiance of Ministers, while repudiating in theory the slightest responsibility for them or their administrative existence, are dealt with in subsequent pages. It is sufficient to remark here that the clearness with which these facts come out in the course of investigating the history of our Departments is of no little assistance to our understanding of the famous struggle between George III. and his Ministers in the latter half of the eighteenth century. To modern generations, so accustomed to the association of Ministers with Parliamentary majorities that earlier conditions



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have been forgotten, George III.'s insistence on his right to appoint his own Secretaries of State has the aspect of an ingenious attempt to turn a mere theory of our constitution into a political weapon. To come upon that struggle in an investigation of the growth of Government Departments is to realise that it arose when the day was hardly past in which a Secretary of State was as little under obligation to Parliament as the King's Private Secretary is to-day. And although, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the position of Secretaries of State had become very much the same from a constitutional point of view as it is now, not until 1848 did the last trace of their earlier standing disappear. In that year Estimates for the salaries of the Civil Service were laid before Parliament; and the cost of civil government was entirely removed from the Consolidated funds. In other words, it became open to Parliament to survey every year the whole extent of the service.

Another point of general interest is that a study of this subject leads to the reflection that government, as a continuous operation bearing on the daily life of the ordinary inhabitant of these islands, is little more than a hundred years old. From this statement one must except, of course, the work of the Treasury; the collection and administration of the revenue has been a continuous operation longer than any other activity of official life. Apart from the revenue, however, there is something very incidental and, so to speak, fragmentary about the way in which matters of home administration appear in State records. So long as the King's peace was kept and the King's taxes paid, a Secretary of State

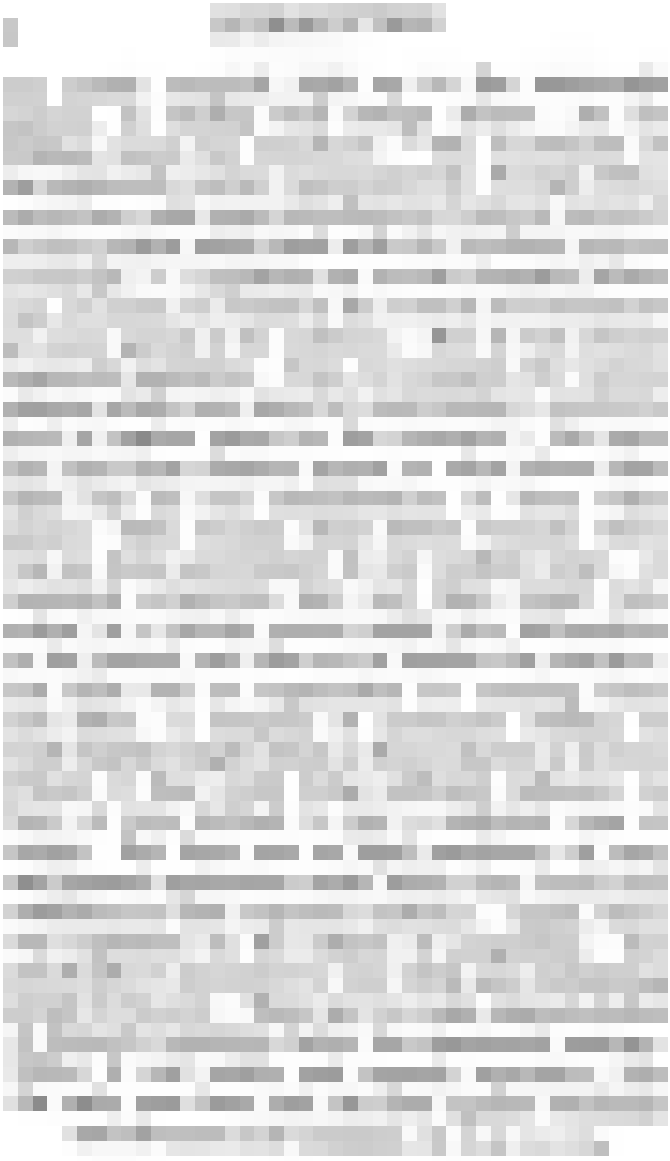


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was mostly occupied, right up to the nineteenth century, in dealing with foreign affairs. As Sir William Anson has remarked: "The Secretaries of the eighteenth century represented the Foreign Office cut in two, with some miscellaneous business assigned to that portion which dealt with the Southern powers of Europe." [1] Legislation on certain domestic affairs can, of course, be found in the records of Parliament at every period of its existence. But it was always spasmodic legislation. Take, for example, the various statutes which were aimed at maintaining a moderate level of market prices for the consumer; the mere fact that these statutes appear so often shows that there was no real administration of them when passed. They became dead letters because there was no home government in our modern sense. A municipal corporation here and there might take action, or a private person might give information to the justices, and thus set in motion the statutes; but there was no organisation for carrying them into effect. A company of merchants wishing to trade together might obtain a Royal charter or Letters Patent, if they could bring sufficient influence to bear, or were inclined to pay a sufficient sum of money. But there was no legal machinery of easy and general application under which they could find authority for their corporate existence. Again, there was legislation on the subject of pauperism; but practically it amounted to very little save forbidding people to be poor. There are two main characteristics of domestic legislation before the nineteenth century. Either it was widely and vaguely repressive, like the early poor laws, and the laws against wholesale

[1] *Law and Custom of the Constitution*, vol. ii. pt. i. p. 164.



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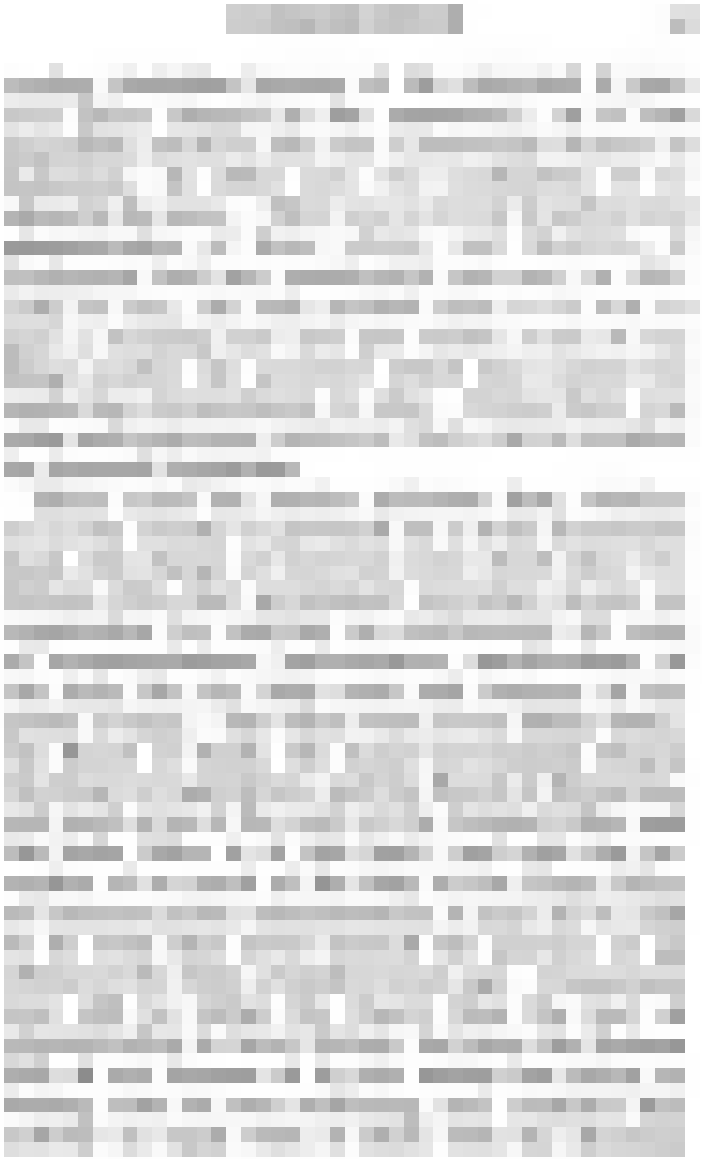
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trading (forbidden because of the command it gave over prices charged to the consumer); or it was impossibly assertive, like the Elizabethan Statute of Labourers. In either case, the explanation to be offered is the same. There was no steady departmental administration of home affairs, and therefore, if Parliament had any considerable grievance or difficulty to face, the only method open to it was to pass a sweeping law and put within reach of the King's justice the processes which had caused the aggrieving circumstances to arise. Unless there was some such grievance, moreover, there was no occasion for domestic legislation.

Hence arises the further reflection that, whether or no the country is governed on a truly democratic basis, this change at least has come about since the Reform Bill—that government nowadays means an organisation for carrying on continuously all sorts of accommodations, conveniences, ameliorations of the daily life, the daily work and business of the public at large. The whole work of the Home Office, the Board of Trade, the Local Government Board, the Board of Agriculture, and the Board of Education, and much even of the work of the Colonial Office and the India Office is of this kind; and with the exception of so much of the duty of the Home Office as concerns prison administration, it may all be said to be work that never entered the purview of an official of the State a hundred years ago. Democracy may still be rather the theory than the fact of administration in Great Britain, but since the Reform Bill—if not because of it—the nation has taken to looking after its own well-being, and considers this activity an equal work of State with the direction

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of foreign relations and the maintenance of armed forces.

It may be gathered from these observations that, strictly speaking, there are only two periods in the history of the Departments of Government, the division between them occurring at the time when the salaries of the Secretaries of State, the officials of the Treasury, the Privy Council, and the Committee of Council for Trade, together with the payment of the staffs of their offices, were placed before Parliament in Estimates, and no longer regarded, even formally, as part of the monies provided for the maintenance of Court officials. It will be more convenient, however, to take our subject in four main divisions :—

i. From the Norman Conquest to the accession of Richard II., a period in which the departments were slowly forming themselves in the Royal Household, but with imperfectly defined duties, and little responsibility.

ii. From 1377 to 1688, a period in which the increase of the royal power steadily gave importance and independence to the operations of the departments.

iii. From 1688 to the end of the eighteenth century, the period in which the responsibility of Ministers of the Crown to Parliament was gradually enforced.

iv. The reforms of the nineteenth century, which finally created a public Civil Service out of the old Civil Government grants to the Crown.

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THE KING'S GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER I

FIRST TRACES OF DEPARTMENTS: 1066–1377

THE many controversies as to the effect of the Norman Conquest upon the national life of England have at least this common ground—that, whatever of local organisation and customary law the new system may have absorbed rather than abolished, the centralising of government, which is of the essence of our subject, was a Norman principle. We are therefore not called upon to go back beyond the Conquest for our starting-point.

It has been held by a distinguished authority that the Curia of the Norman Kings, a "group of officials, the holders of the new political offices," is the germ from which have developed the Departments of Government.[1] But this is only true in so far as the official duties alone of some members of the Curia are regarded. The Curia soon became a kind of inner Council of State; and it is not to a Council that we must look for the earliest appearance of our subject. The distinguishing mark of the modern system of government is that it consists in the conveyance of the King's commands by certain constitutional processes;

[1] Anson, II. i. 12.

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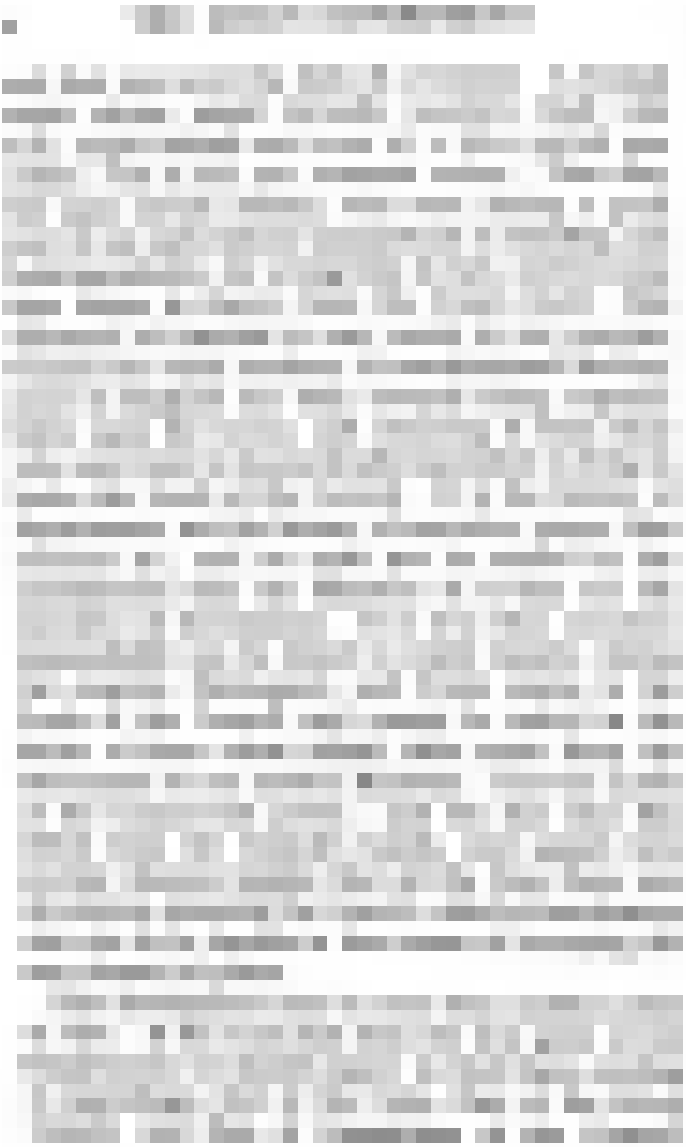
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and that was never the duty of a Council. A Council might advise, might formally associate itself with acts, might initiate and even at a later period give orders; but it did not transmit orders. That duty fell upon certain officials, who were during a great part of our early history unimportant in standing, and indistinguishable, for a long time in fact, and for some time longer in theory, from the Crown itself. This difference of function is very much to our purpose, because the whole tendency of constitutional development in England has been towards fixing responsibility upon the Crown, and removing it from those who were found to be practically impossible to bring to book—the Lords of the Council. It is the history of departments, not the history of executive power, that concerns us; and we must not be misled by the consideration that the Ministers of to-day are the executive of Government. It is true that executive responsibility can be found to reside largely, during the Angevin, Plantagenet, and Tudor reigns, in the Lords of the Council, and cannot be traced in the duties of those whose official titles make them the forerunners of our modern Ministers. But the Lords of the Council lost power; and the fact that this ebbed from the Council's hands, and passed into another channel, implies that all the time there was developing, alongside the Council, a kind of functionary who was to be capable in due course of becoming the new channel of power.

This development may be seen from another point of view. If the Curia had been the true germ of our Departments we should expect to find them existing as appendages, first of the Curia, then of the Privy Council, and then of Committees of the Council.



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Instead of that, we find them taking shape so distinctly clear of the Council that, as the latter weakens, the former grow more important. The very reason why Cabinet government was able to oust the Privy Council so quietly from its position, was that the executive machinery existed independently of the Council. When the nominal wielders of this machinery were men of force, the Council had no hold at all upon power. There will therefore be more profit than might at first sight appear in giving attention rather to the unimportant forerunners of modern Ministers than to the important people who exercised in earlier times so many of their functions.

The Original Secretaryship

We find these minor functionaries existing first as subordinates of two of the great officers of the Norman system. The three great officers were the Justiciar, the Chancellor, and the Treasurer.[1] The duties of the Justiciar need not concern us much; for, since they consisted in representing the King when the latter was absent from the kingdom, or merely from a Council (or, as in the early years of Henry III., during a minority) they would not be likely to develop departmental activities different in kind from those developing under the Sovereign. The two other officers were the King's channels of action—the Chancellor in matters of general administration and justice, and the Treasurer in matters of finance. The Chancellor was

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the King's secretary, and as such held the Seal. He was in close personal attendance on the King, and was responsible for the form given to every act of the King that required to be recorded. From his duties most of the Departments of Government have issued; but under the Norman Kings his work was too varied and too little organised to give us any definite starting-point.

The Exchequer, the First Department

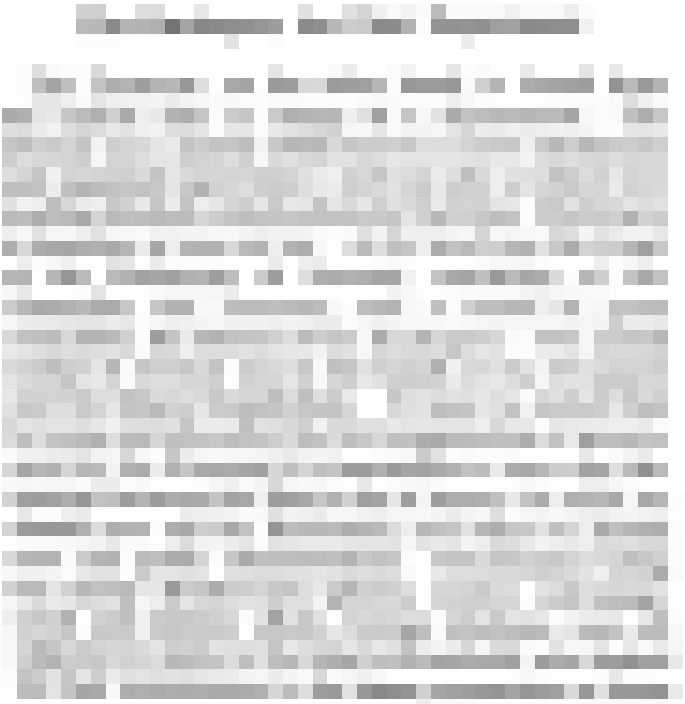
The Treasurer, on the other hand, is found from the earliest date in charge of a department. The revenue was a matter which had to receive continuous and organised supervision; and was also a subject not needing detailed authorisations by the King. Machinery is therefore at once set up. At its head was the Court of the Exchequer of Account, consisting of the Chancellor, the Treasurer, and a board of great councillors, the Barons of the Exchequer. The actual receipt of revenue was in the hands of the Treasurer and the King's Chamberlain. It must be noted that for some centuries after the first organisation of government by the Normans it is impossible to trace any distinction between the King's use of money for what we should now call his Household, and what we should now call public administration. Government being but slowly divided into spheres, justice, patronage, naval and military affairs, foreign relations, were all subjects for clerks in the King's Household, who looked for their maintenance to the same paymasters as those

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The revenue was so wholly in the King's hands that money was usually paid into the King's Chamber, and accumulated there under the charge of the Chamberlain and the Cofferer. But at the same time the Exchequer had an office of its own, a fact which emphasises its priority among the departments. Whether it was separately housed from the very first is uncertain; but since there is record, as early as 1155, of a payment for "repairing the house of the Exchequer," [1] it is quite likely that the department was given an office at the time of its formation. It would consist of a house within the royal precincts at Westminster. The reason for allotting a permanent office would be, no doubt, that the collection of revenue called for regularity; and regularity would be impossible of attainment if the officials of the Exchequer moved about with the Court, like the other great officials. Moreover, in this sphere of government, earlier than in any other, papers would require to be preserved. The taxable capacity of all places in the kingdom would need to be kept on record; and the rolls of each year would be a check upon the payments of the next. Hence the Exchequer became the first depository of archives; and gradually came to serve for other documents than financial ones alone.[2]

[1] *Pipe Roll*, 31 Henry I., p. 4.

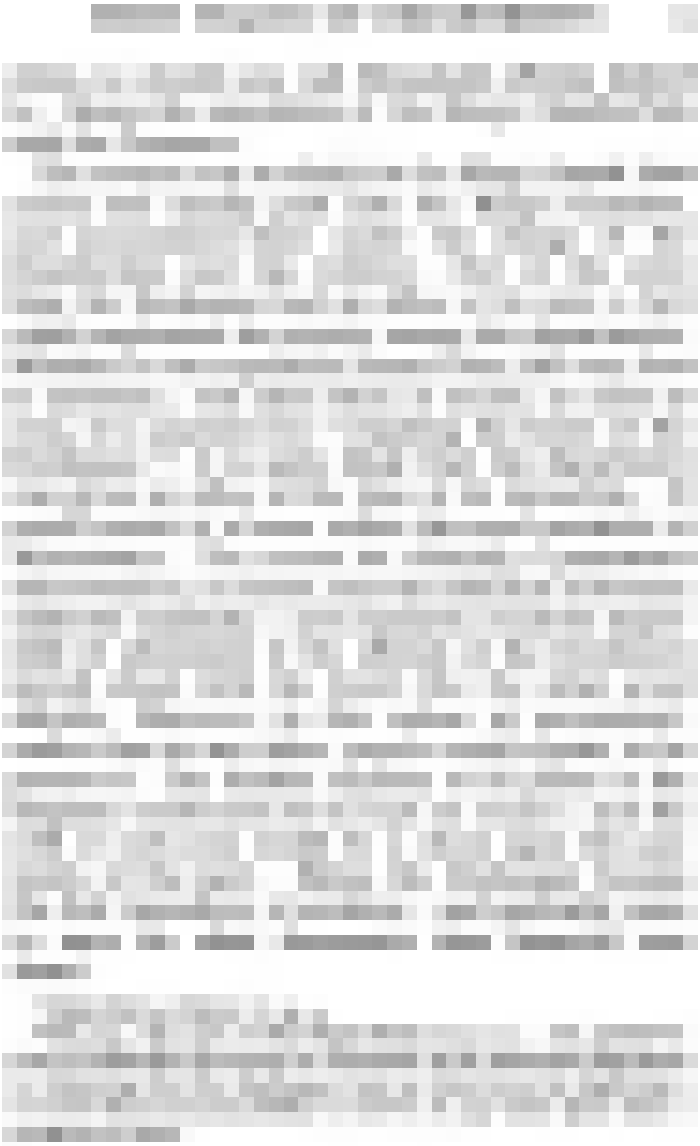
[2] See, *e.g.*, the case of the Papal Bulls on p. 11. The preservation of *Domesday Book* may be advanced as an additional argument for believing that the Exchequer had an office from the beginning; it would have been less likely to survive in any other place than a permanent office.

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The revenue was so wholly in the King's hands that money was usually paid into the King's Chamber, and accumulated there under the charge of the Chamberlain and the Cofferer. But at the same time the Exchequer had an office of its own, a fact which emphasises its priority among the departments. Whether it was separately housed from the very first is uncertain; but since there is record, as early as 1155, of a payment for "repairing the house of the Exchequer," [1] it is quite likely that the department was given an office at the time of its formation. It would consist of a house within the royal precincts at Westminster. The reason for allotting a permanent office would be, no doubt, that the collection of revenue called for regularity; and regularity would be impossible of attainment if the officials of the Exchequer moved about with the Court, like the other great officials. Moreover, in this sphere of government, earlier than in any other, papers would require to be preserved. The taxable capacity of all places in the kingdom would need to be kept on record; and the rolls of each year would be a check upon the payments of the next. Hence the Exchequer became the first depository of archives; and gradually came to serve for other documents than financial ones alone.[2]

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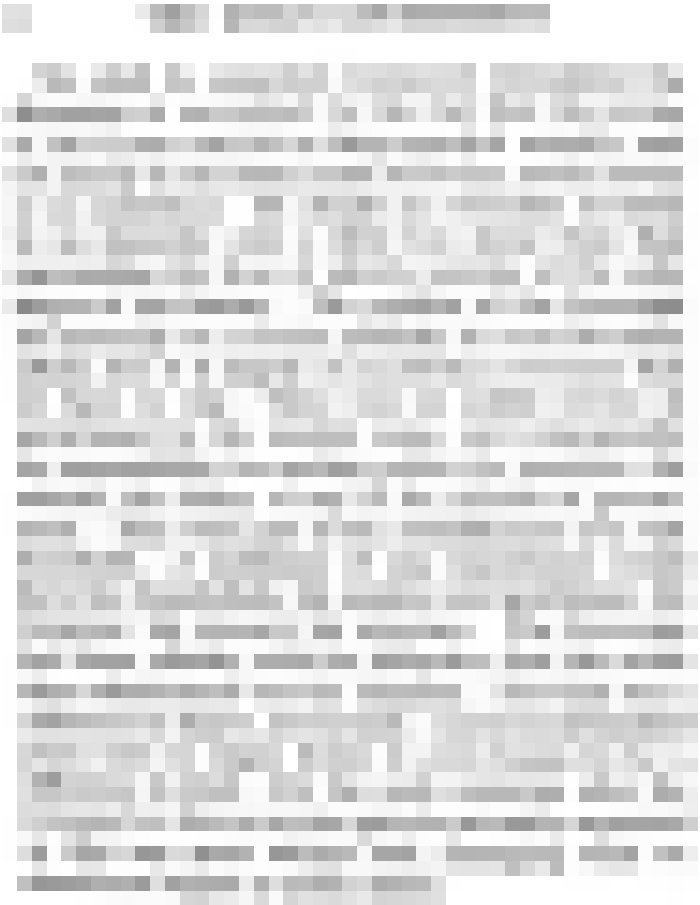
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We shall be somewhat hampered throughout the discussion of our subject by the fact that the service of the Crown was for so long regarded actually, and not merely in the formal sense of to-day, as the service of an individual. Its details are therefore involved in an obscurity only a little less dense than that surrounding the lives of private persons of the early stages of our history. The position of the Sovereign led naturally to a certain publicity in even his minor affairs, but it is largely on accidental references that we have to rely. There was no public service of government in the modern sense, and consequently no responsibility for making public the numbers, the salaries, the duties, of any of the officials of government. They were part of the establishment of a vast household. A nobleman of any importance would have his chamberlain, his esquires and gentlemen, his treasurer, his steward, his secretary. The Sovereign had these officials, with the difference that the estate they administered was the kingdom. But that was a difference in degree, not in kind; and several hundred years were to elapse before it even began to be a difference in kind. For the early centuries after the Conquest we have a service quite as privately organised as that any great subject lord, managing what we should now regard as public affairs.

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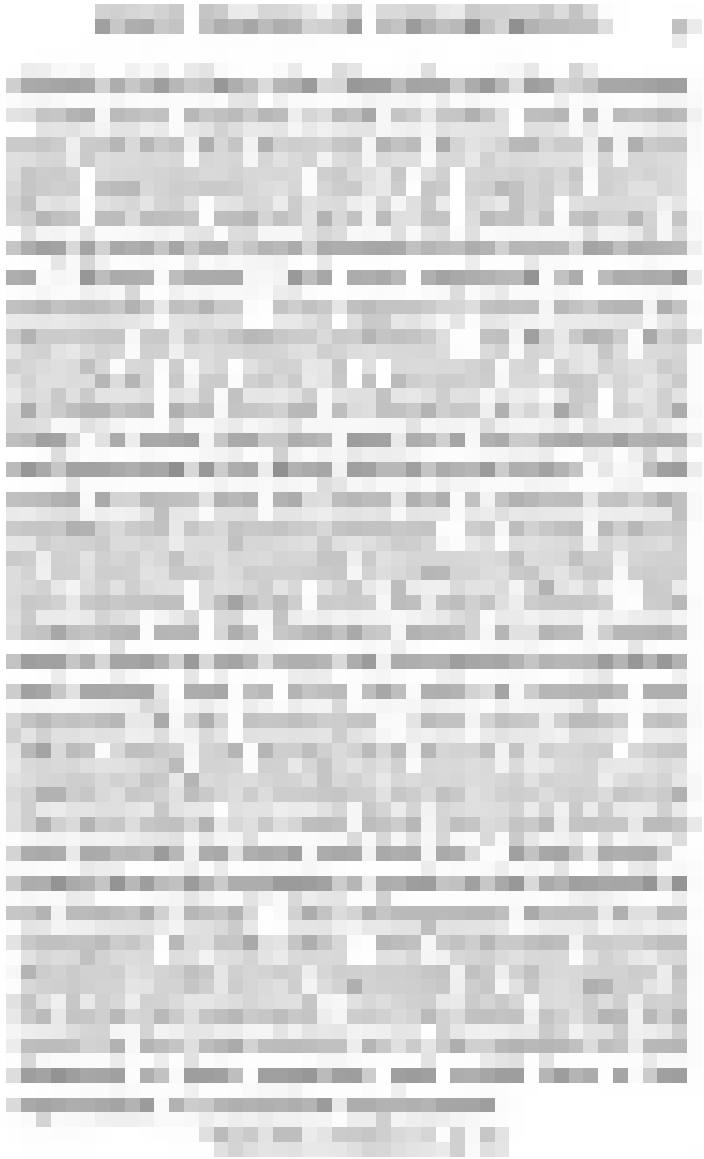
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officials of the King—the Chancellor and the Treasurer —must have required a staff of clerks, and it would seem probable that from the first the position of these clerks approximated to that of an organised service. There certainly existed late in the twelfth century a class of men in the Royal Household who were described as "King's clerks," and were employed in various subordinate duties. They appear to have become by that time an established profession. In the *Pipe Roll* for 1189–90 is an entry of a payment of £55 by the Archdeacon and Provost of Beverley as a gift to the King "in order that they may be in the guardianship and protection of the King, like his royal clerks."[1] This seems to argue that the clerks had a position of long standing and recognised privileges. It would, indeed, be no more than reasonable to suppose that they came into existence together with the great officers. The Chancellor and the Treasurer would at once require men to draw up and copy out documents for signature and sealing, and to keep the rolls of receipts and payments at the Exchequer. Now since these two officers, living and having their board at Court, were supplied with their attendants and servants from among the royal retinue, it is most likely that their clerks also were provided for them, and that the "King's clerks" formed from the beginning a grade in the household of the Norman Kings. This arrangement would be advantageous to both sides. The Chancellor and the Treasurer would not be responsible for the support of the clerks they employed; and the clerks on their side would be free from anxiety as to the possible fall and dismissal of their superiors, and would have a fair expectation of continuous employment.

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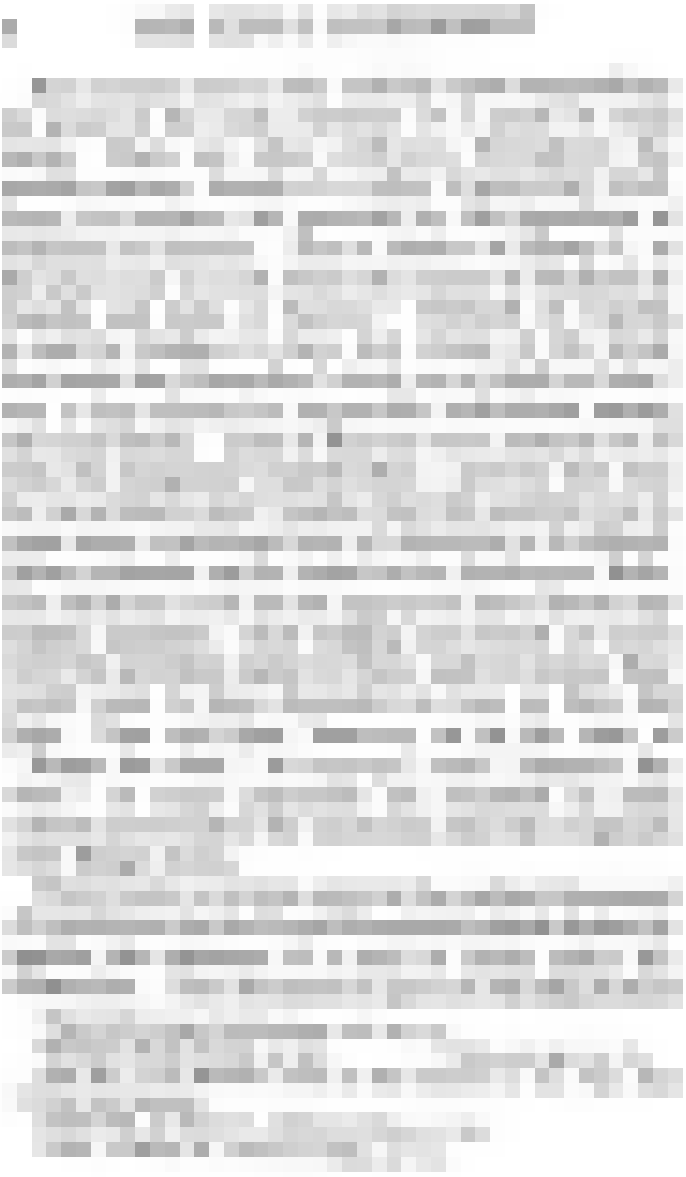
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There is also a curious entry in the earliest document of regulations for the Royal Household, which distinctly implies the existence of a staff of clerks under the Chancellor. This document is part of *The Black Book*

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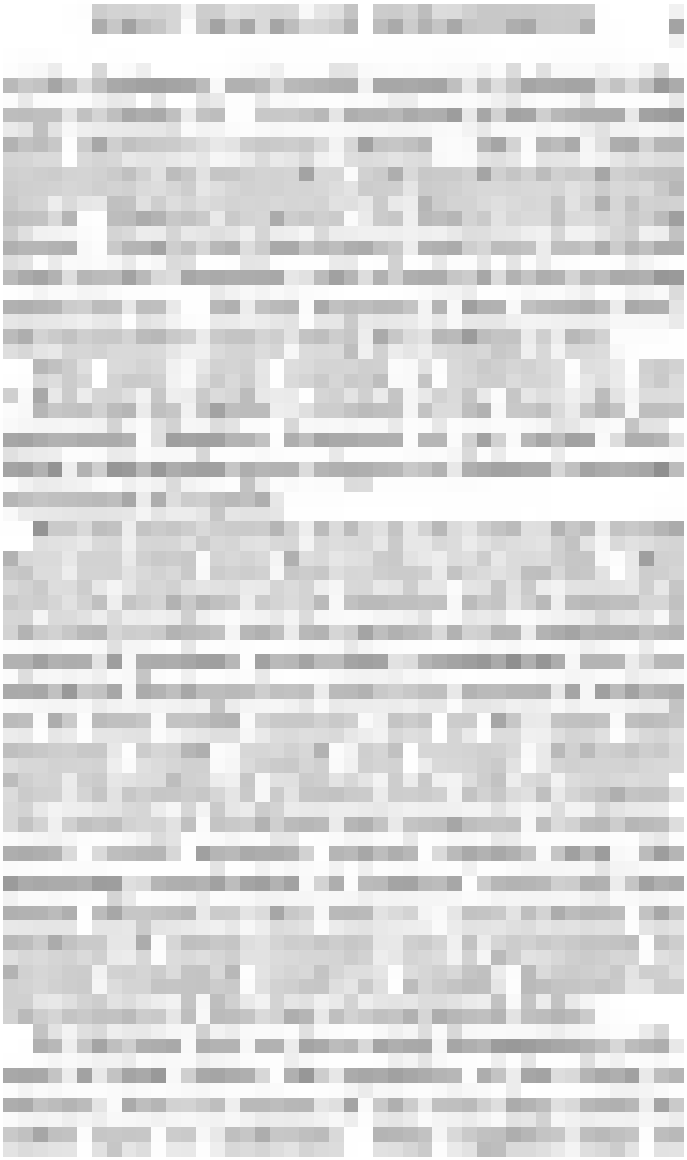
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Separation between Chancellorship and Secretaryship

But a more important fact is that by this time the staff of clerks was being drawn upon to fulfil duties which had originally been discharged by the Chancellor. He was becoming more and more occupied with the administration of justice, and could no longer act efficiently as the King's Secretary. At what period this began to happen cannot be definitely known; it is not impossible, when we consider how much the Chancellor was responsible for, that from the very first he had had occasionally to be replaced by a clerk in attendance on the King. It is rather curious—and the fact has no little bearing on the development of our Constitution—that, as the Chancellor fell away

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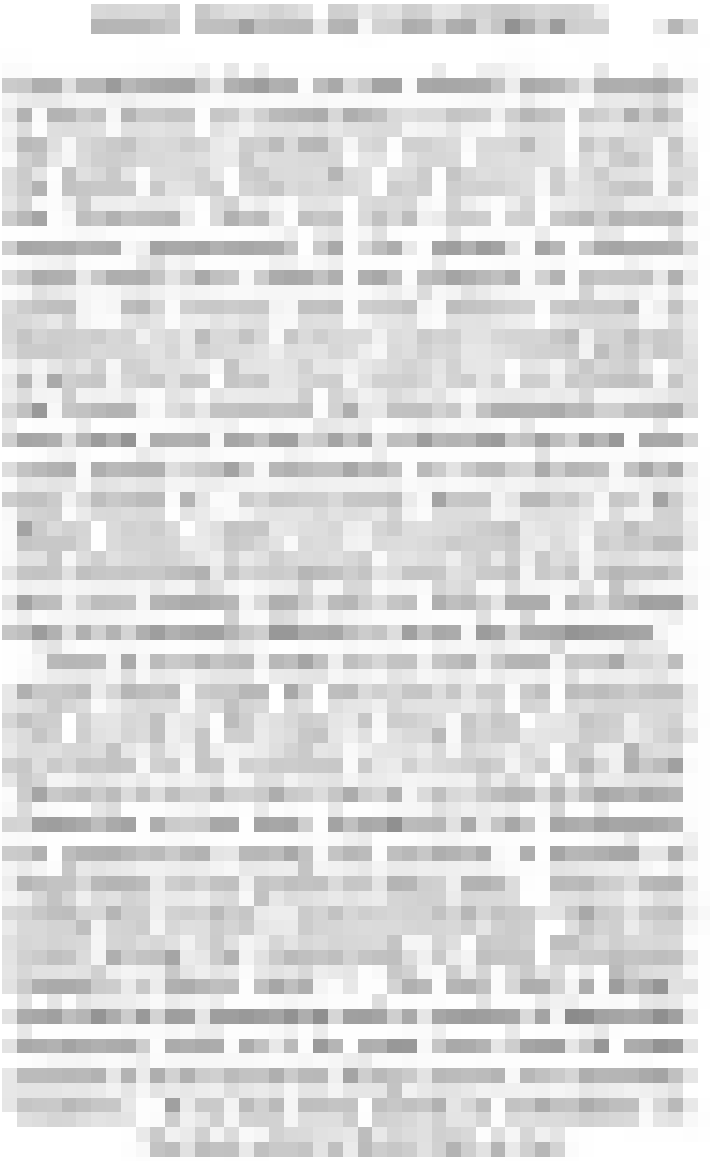
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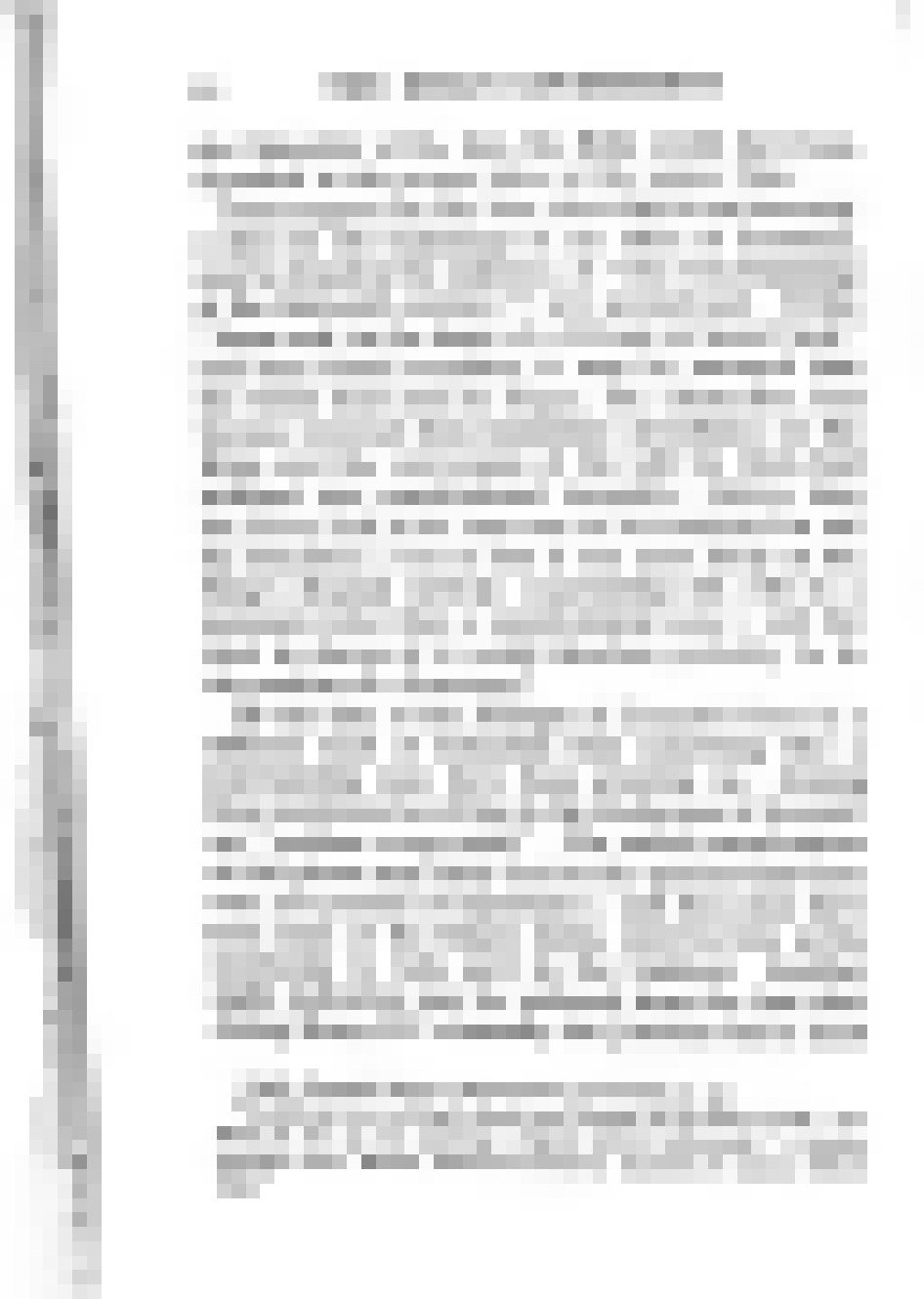
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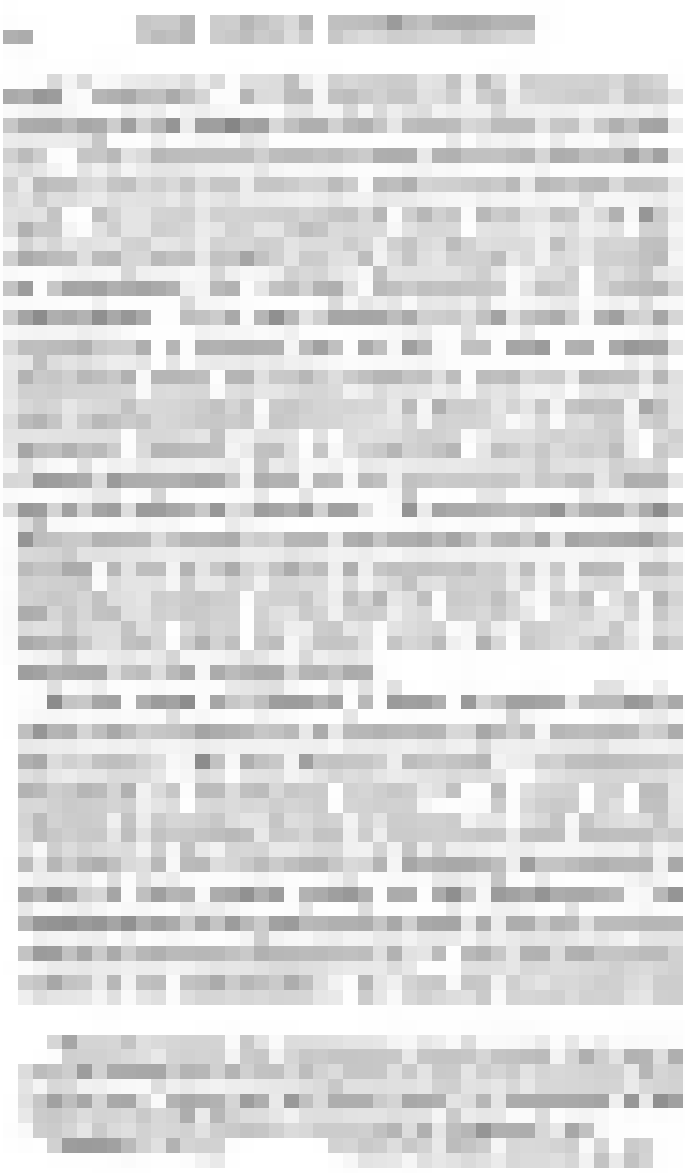
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In the reign of Edward I. there is again a King's clerk who is referred to as Secretary and a member of the Council. He was Francis Accursii, "Consiliarius Familiaris et Secretarius noster."[2] A man of distinction in learning, Doctor of Civil Law, and formerly a student at the University of Bologna, he received a grant of forty marks yearly at the Exchequer "in consideration of his past services and of future services which he has bound himself to do."[3] He, like Maunsell, acted as an ambassador; in 1275 he is proctor for

[1] Maunsell, besides the commissions already noted, had one in 1257 as justiciar for the city of London on one of the occasions when London was "taken into the King's hand" by suspension of the mayor and sheriffs (Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, I. 90).

[2] *Fœdera*, I. ii. 173. [3] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1272–81, p. 460.



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In the reign of Edward I. there is again a King's clerk who is referred to as Secretary and a member of the Council. He was Francis Accursii, "Consiliarius Familiaris et Secretarius noster."[2] A man of distinction in learning, Doctor of Civil Law, and formerly a student at the University of Bologna, he received a grant of forty marks yearly at the Exchequer "in consideration of his past services and of future services which he has bound himself to do."[3] He, like Maunsell, acted as an ambassador; in 1275 he is proctor for

[1] Maunsell, besides the commissions already noted, had one in 1257 as justiciar for the city of London on one of the occasions when London was "taken into the King's hand" by suspension of the mayor and sheriffs (Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom*, I. 90).

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the King at the Court of France in some business then pending ;[1] and in 1278 he goes to Rome with another man on the King's affairs.[2] His forty marks yearly was evidently the formal salary, for in 1279 it appears that he was in receipt of a sum of more than £100 for "his maintenance in the King's service."[3]

Two of Accursii's successors were John de Vescy and Antony Bek, who are referred to in a charter of Edward II. as "Domini Regis patris nostri Secretarios."[4] It is not quite clear from this phrase whether they were Secretaries together, or in succession ; but it is not unlikely that they acted together. The office was comparatively so unimportant in standing, and yet at times no doubt so pressed with work, that two of the clerks may have shared the duties. On the other hand it may be remarked that the name of de Vescy—the first name of a man of family that we meet in the list of Secretaries—suggests that the office, however uncertain in standing, was not without possibilities of dignity. The description of another of Accursii's successors, John de Benstede, as "*ipsius* Domini Regis Secretarius,"[5] also suggests that the office was regarded as a confidential one.

Duties and Emoluments of King's Clerks

At this same period we begin to have a clearer view of the extent to which the grade of King's clerks was

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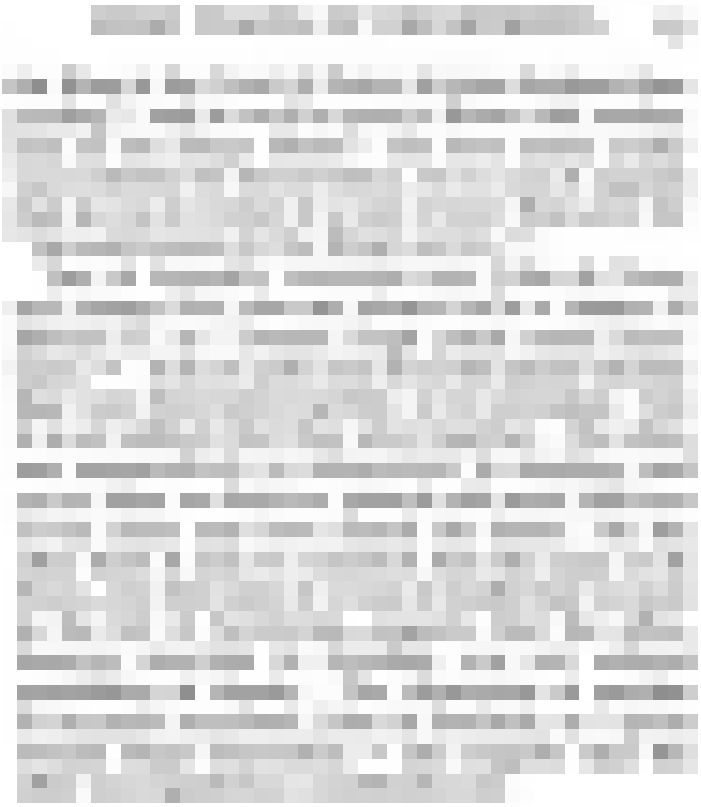
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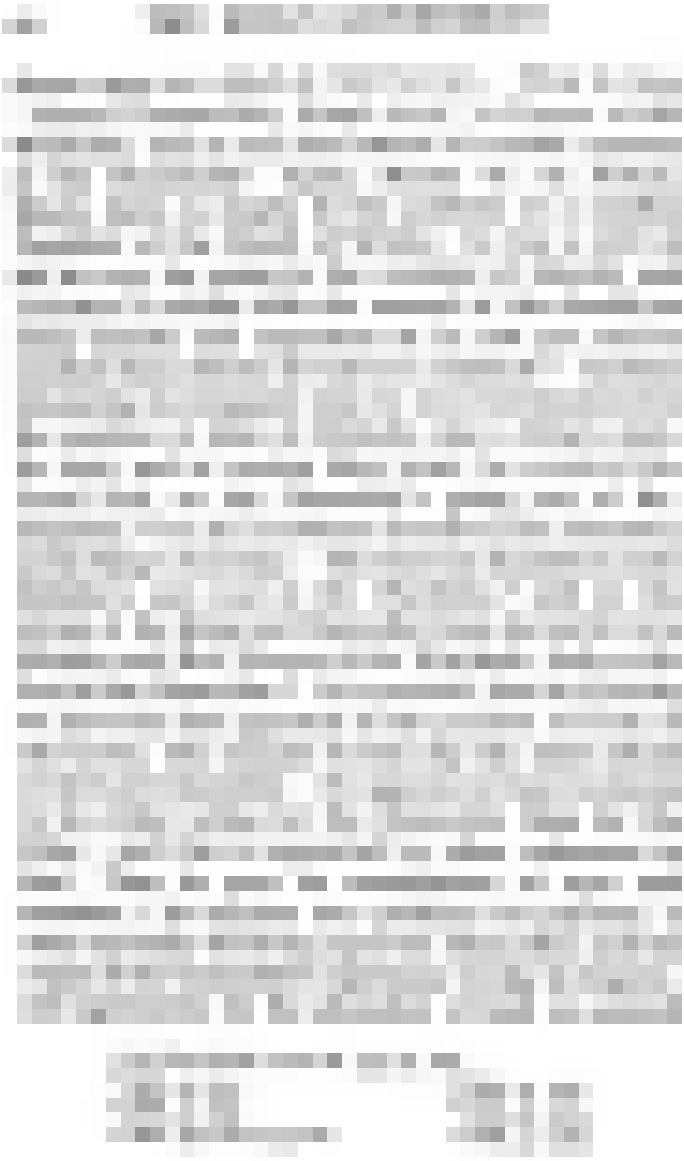
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With the reign of Edward II. we get some light upon the way in which the increasing staff of King's clerks was provided for. Being generally men of good education but modest origins, they would be for the most part in Orders; and the Patent Rolls of this period contain numerous grants to King's clerks of Church preferments, such as prebends, and deaneries.[2] At the same time the system of fees would provide for many clerks in the more legal parts of the business of government; a grant for life of the office of chirographer before the Justices of the Bench was evidently a valuable grant, and, as it is not accompanied by any warrant to the Exchequer, it is to be supposed that its value resided in the fees.[3] So would the value of the office of Keeper of the Hanaper of the Chancery; and that of the recognisance of debts for a port town.[4] Again, one of the King's clerks is appointed "escheator on this side Trent."[5] The Keeper of the Wardrobe is still a King's clerk, and he has other King's clerks as clerks in his department.[6] Some King's clerks are

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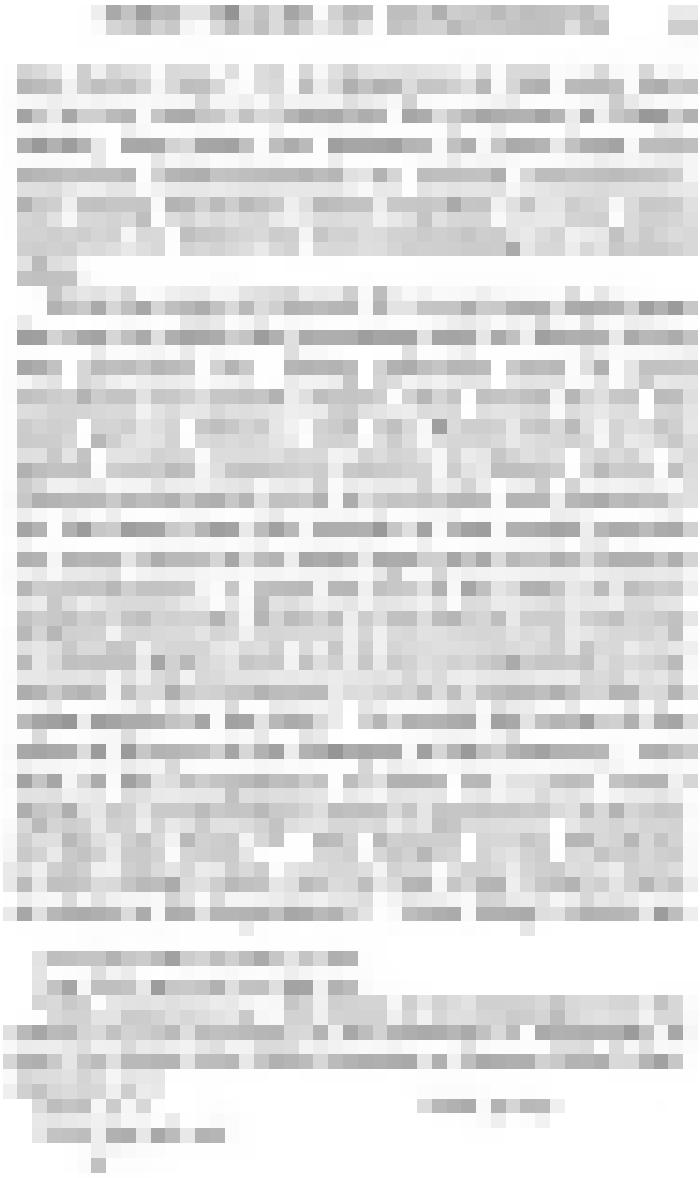
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The office of King's Secretary under Edward II. presents some puzzling aspects. It might, as we have seen in the case of Francis Accursii, and that of John Maunsell, be associated with the work of an Envoy. But for some time to come the post, merely as a post, is obviously a minor one at Court. Thus William de Melton, who had been King's Secretary in 1308, has become Keeper of the Wardrobe in 1315.[2] On the other hand, the rank of King's clerk might lead to the highest offices. John de Sandale, King's clerk, was Chancellor in 1314, and at the same time was acting as Treasurer.[3] Yet even in such a document as an indemnity for a bond for repayment of a loan to the King, in which he appears with great lords like Aymer de Valence and Hugh le Despenser, the description "King's clerk" is all that is attached to his name.[4] Moreover, the personal seal of a King's clerk had validity; we have seen the Great Seal deposited under the seal of one of them; and money could be drawn from the Exchequer for officials on the King's business on the authority of a Bill of the Wardrobe sealed with the seal of the King's clerk who was Keeper of the Wardrobe.[5]

It would seem, from certain forms observed in the Patent Rolls of this reign, that a further step in the coping with public business was being taken by the

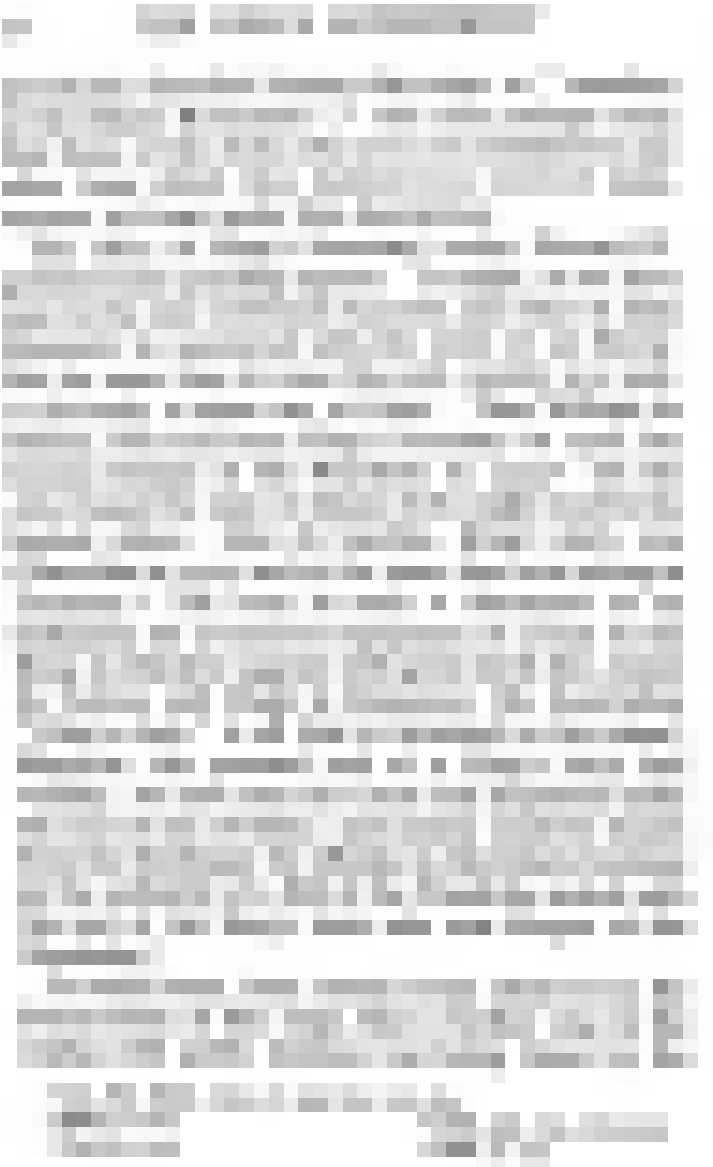
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Chancery finally Separated

Meanwhile the Chancellor's functions had been departing finally from the secretarial duties which had originally belonged to his position. Under Edward III. we find the Chancery a fully-grown judicial department. The staff are still described as "King's clerks"; but from the peculiarly precise nature of the references to them—"the King's clerks in the Chancery of England of the first (or the second) form,"[1]—as well

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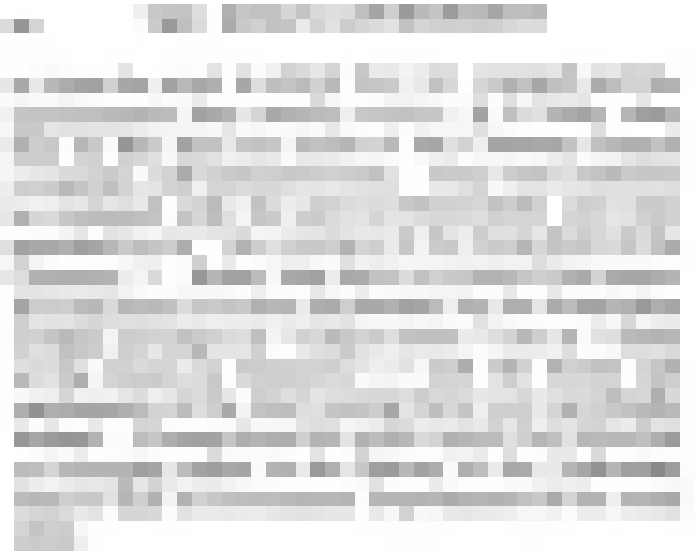


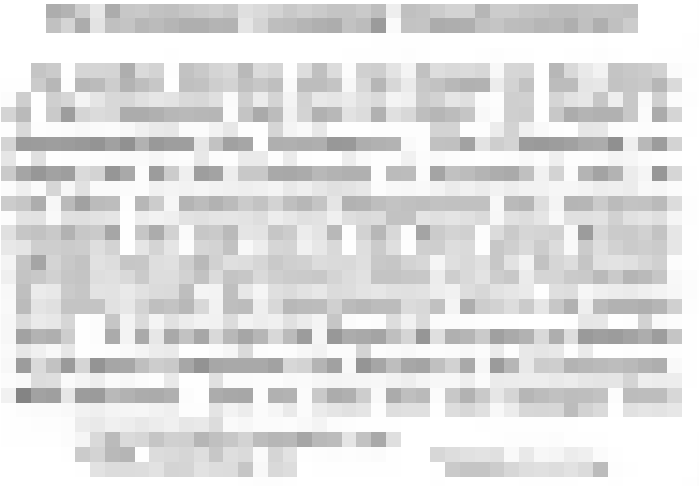
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The change is marked by the promulgation in 1328 of *The Ordinance of the Exchequer*.[1] A piece of reorganisation and regulation of this magnitude implies that a new state of affairs had arisen, demanding new machinery. In several branches an increase of the number of clerks is ordered; special clerks are to be appointed to superintend the sections of the department which dealt with fines, with forfeited lands, etc.; and in all branches minute instructions are laid down for the conduct of revenue business.[2] The natural deduction is that the King felt some necessity for replacing the control of the Chancellor and Barons by setting up an automatic system. As long as the Sovereign had representatives at the Exchequer who

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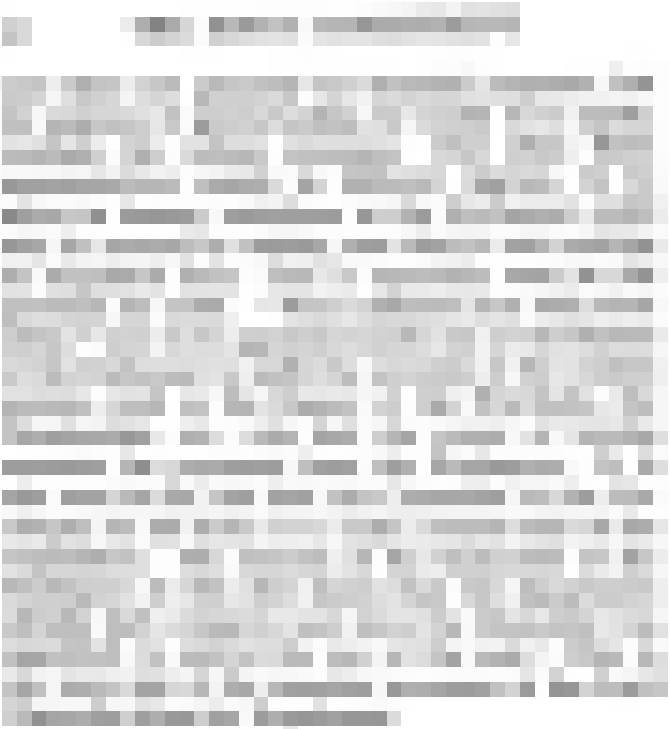
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First Civil Officials for the Armed Forces

We have thus arrived at a stage at which it is possible to trace fairly clearly the outlines of two purely official departments of government—the Secretaryship and the Treasury. We may now add the first signs

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of two more of capital importance—the permanent civil staffs of the armed forces of the Crown. Under Edward III. appear a "clerk of the ships, galleys, barges, balingers, and other the King's vessels"; [1] and a "clerk of the Wardrobe, of armour, shot, gunpowder, etc." [2] These are the two officials who are to develop into the Comptroller of the Navy and the Master-General of the Ordnance, and ultimately into the Admiralty and the War Office. Their titles show that they were both drawn from the ordinary staff of King's clerks, merely taking over certain special duties, as the King's Secretary had done.

It has, of course, to be remembered that there was no such thing as a standing army or armed naval force. The army was raised as it was required by feudal service, and later by musters under Commissions of Array for each county; and the armed naval force was a proportion of these musters put on board ship.[3] The upkeep of the King's castles fell originally on the feudal lords, and, later, on the different localities, which were not infrequently glad, for their own sake, to keep such defences in repair. But it is obvious that, although the *personnel* could thus be provided as need arose, and the fortresses kept ready, yet cannon must have had to be kept and accounted for, some store of powder and shot accumulated, and armour held in store. One of the King's clerks would come in time to make tally of such munitions; and as possessions of the King's they would come under

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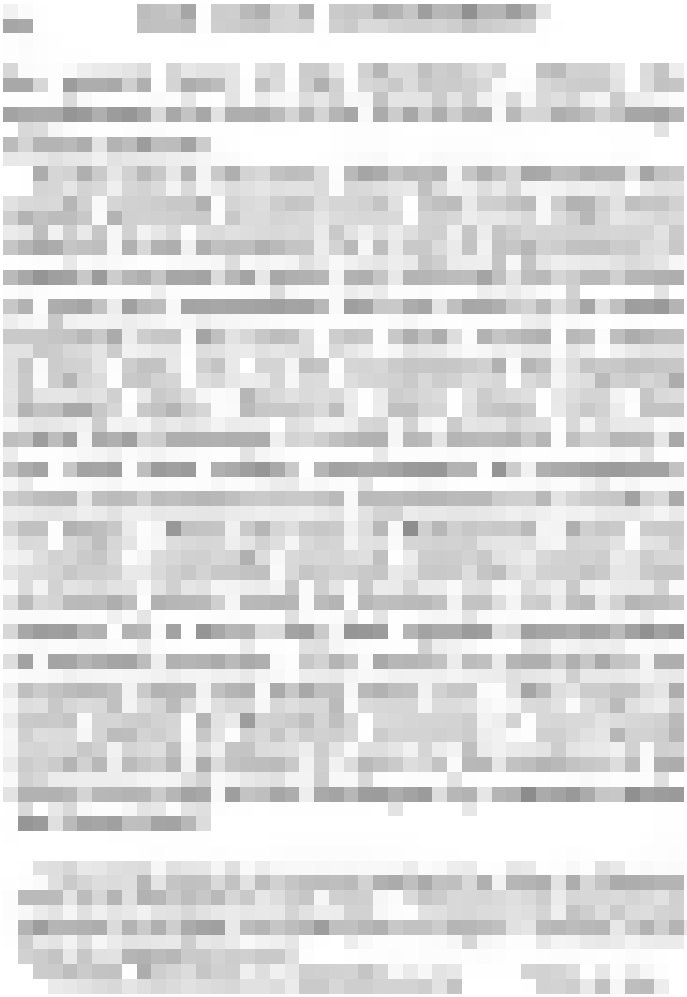
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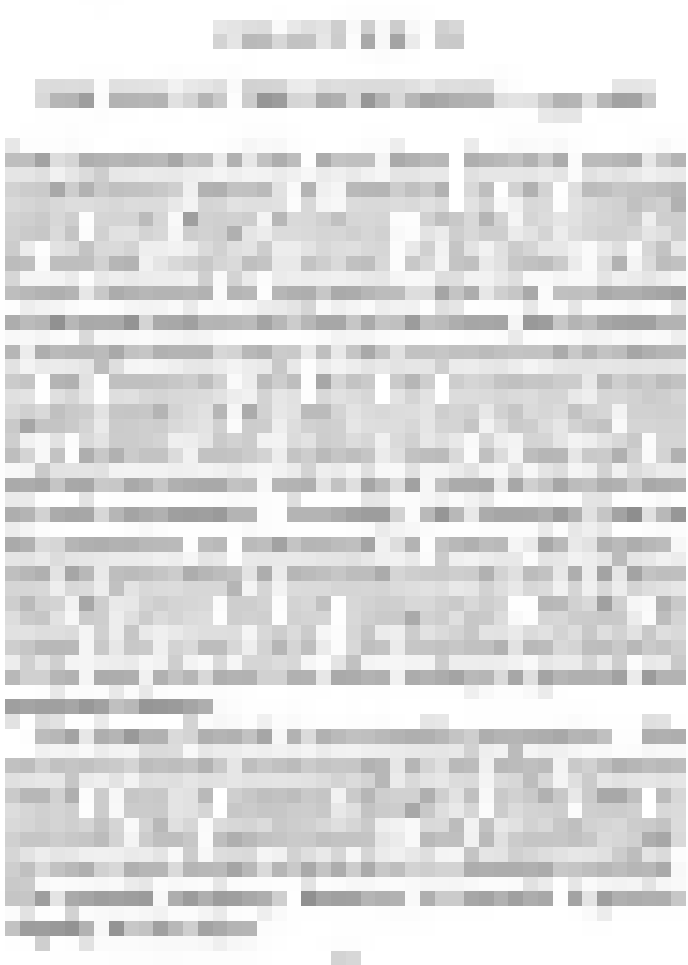


CHAPTER II

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THE importance of the next three hundred years in constitutional history is reflected in the changing status of the King's Secretary. Firstly, he ceases to be entirely a private servant of the King; as the Crown increased its prerogative after the weakening of the great lords in the Wars of the Roses, the Secretary is brought within range of the perpetual watchfulness of the Commons, and from the occasional charges against holders of the office it is clear that they were in a position which enabled them to take part in political movements, and to be of value to the plotters of such movements. Secondly, the Secretary has in his possession an instrument of power, the Signet; and the prescribing of formalities for the use of it show that the power was not unimportant. Finally, he ceases to be a mere clerk; the standing and character of the men who held the office undergo a gradual and profound change.

The change, indeed, is not steadily progressive. We are apt to find the secretaryship in one reign a post for which a man of ambition thought it worth while to surrender other appointments; and in another reign to come upon details which give it a humbler position. The general tendency, however, is towards a greater dignity in the office.



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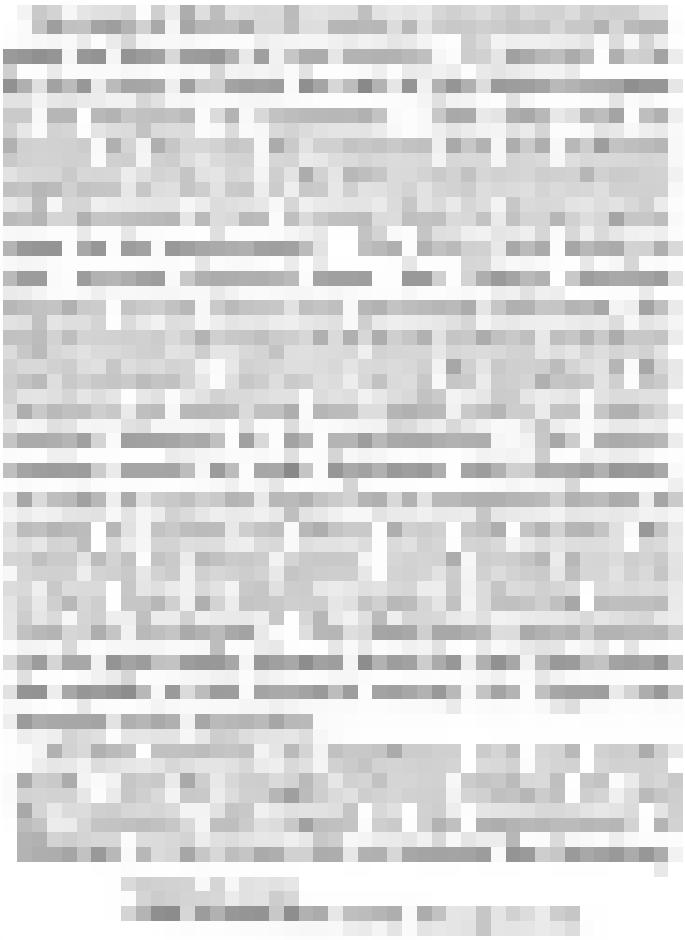
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The Signet

The reign of Richard II. makes a convenient starting-point for this stage of our inquiry. It appears to be the first reign in which the use of the Signet becomes at all frequent or important. This may well be because by this time the Commons had had sufficient experience of the use of the Privy Seal for interference with the course of law to cause them to devise regulations for its employment.[1] The Privy Seal being on this account removed from the King's absolute disposal, as the Great Seal previously had been, the Signet became the King's first-hand medium of indicating his pleasure; and as it was in the keeping of the Secretary, an ambitious man might easily see opportunities inherent in its guardianship. The opportunities would be both legitimate and illegitimate. As early as 1391 the Signet was a recognised means of setting in motion the Privy Seal, and thereby the Great Seal, for letters patent; and it would also seem to have been an effective means of drawing money from the Exchequer.[2] The illegitimate opportunities can be most easily inferred from the fact that before the middle of the fifteenth century the Signet was brought under regulation.

At first, however, its importance was not understood; and the struggles between Richard II. and the Commons with regard to the appointment of Ministers of the Crown did not include the Secretary.

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The Chancellor, the Privy Seal, and the Treasurer were the officials whose nomination the Commons wished to have the power of sanctioning. The Secretaries of this reign appear to have been men of the type of their predecessors, and to have followed much the same course of progress. Thus Robert Braybroke, Secretary in 1379, passed on, like John de Sandale, to be Chancellor; and finally to Church preferment.[1] John Bacun, who was Secretary in 1384, had begun as a King's clerk, risen to be Keeper of the Jewels, and then Chamberlain of the Exchequer;[2] and it is interesting that he thought it good to leave this post (which must have involved some profitable fees) for the Secretaryship. Yet here again, as in the case of John de Sandale, the title seems to have been as yet of small account; Bacun is sometimes described, while holding the Secretaryship, merely as "King's clerk."[3]

During the next two reigns the only apparent change is that the Secretaries begin to be associated with the Privy Council. Under Henry IV. a Secretary, John Prophete, was a Privy Councillor at the time of his appointment.[4] Under Henry V. William Alnewick, the Secretary, was present in the Privy Council, apparently by virtue of his office, not having been previously a member of the Council.[5]

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Again, from what we know of William Beckington, who was Secretary about 1439, the post is clearly becoming more dignified. In his journal of the embassy treating for peace with France, he is seen taking his full share of the negotiations; and it is also interesting to see that his title is more uniformly employed, and therefore presumably more honourable. He refers to himself as "Bekynton, Secretarius," as if the description were fully as important as his temporary standing in the embassy.[3]

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Further, during this reign we have the first clear instances of political influence being attached to the Secretaryship. In 1432 the Duke of Gloucester's dismissal of royal officials included the Secretary, with the Chamberlain, the Steward, the Dean of the Chapel, and the Almoner.[4] It is worth noting that the Signet was dealt with ceremoniously. It was sealed up in a bag under Gloucester's seal and delivered to the Treasurer of the Exchequer. Again, in 1451 Gervais de Volore is included among those, headed by

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Equally significant of the rise in the status of the Secretary is the higher position he begins to take in the Royal Household. Under Edward III. he ranked with the clerks of the Privy Seal;[3] and a hundred years later, in Henry VI.'s *Ordinances for the Royal Household*, he remains in much the same place, being placed after the Physician in the provision for his maintenance; and he and his two clerks are allowed only two yeomen to attend them.[4] Still, with two clerks under him, the Secretary was considerably in advance of his early status as merely one of the clerks himself.

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Under Edward IV. the Secretary's establishment, both in size and in precedence, is seen to have made a notable advance. The Secretary is ranked next to

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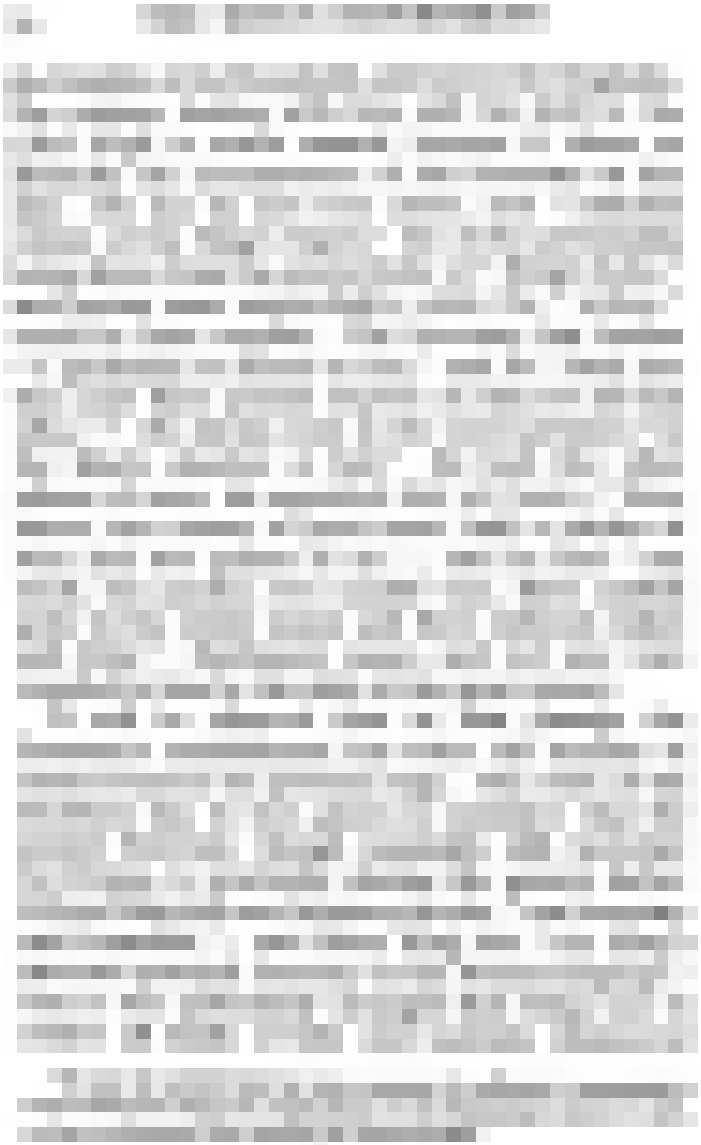
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It will be observed that in this passage the Secretary's establishment has twice the number of clerks it had in the previous reign. The work of the Secretary has, in fact, grown so extensive that the second Secretary, though nominally still Secretary for France, is practically sharing the general duties. Edward Hatclyffe was Secretary in 1464, "our Secretary and Councillor"; and Oliver King was "the King's first and principal Secretary in the French language." But it was particularly arranged that King was to receive all kinds of bills and warrants whatsoever

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A clear sign of change is the carrying over of the secretaryship from one reign to another. Thus Oliver King was Secretary again under Henry VII.; and a later Secretary of Henry VII., Dr. Routhale, Bishop of Durham, continued his duties under Henry VIII.[3] It must be concluded that the office was beginning to have an importance of its own.

Secretaries given Duties in Parliament

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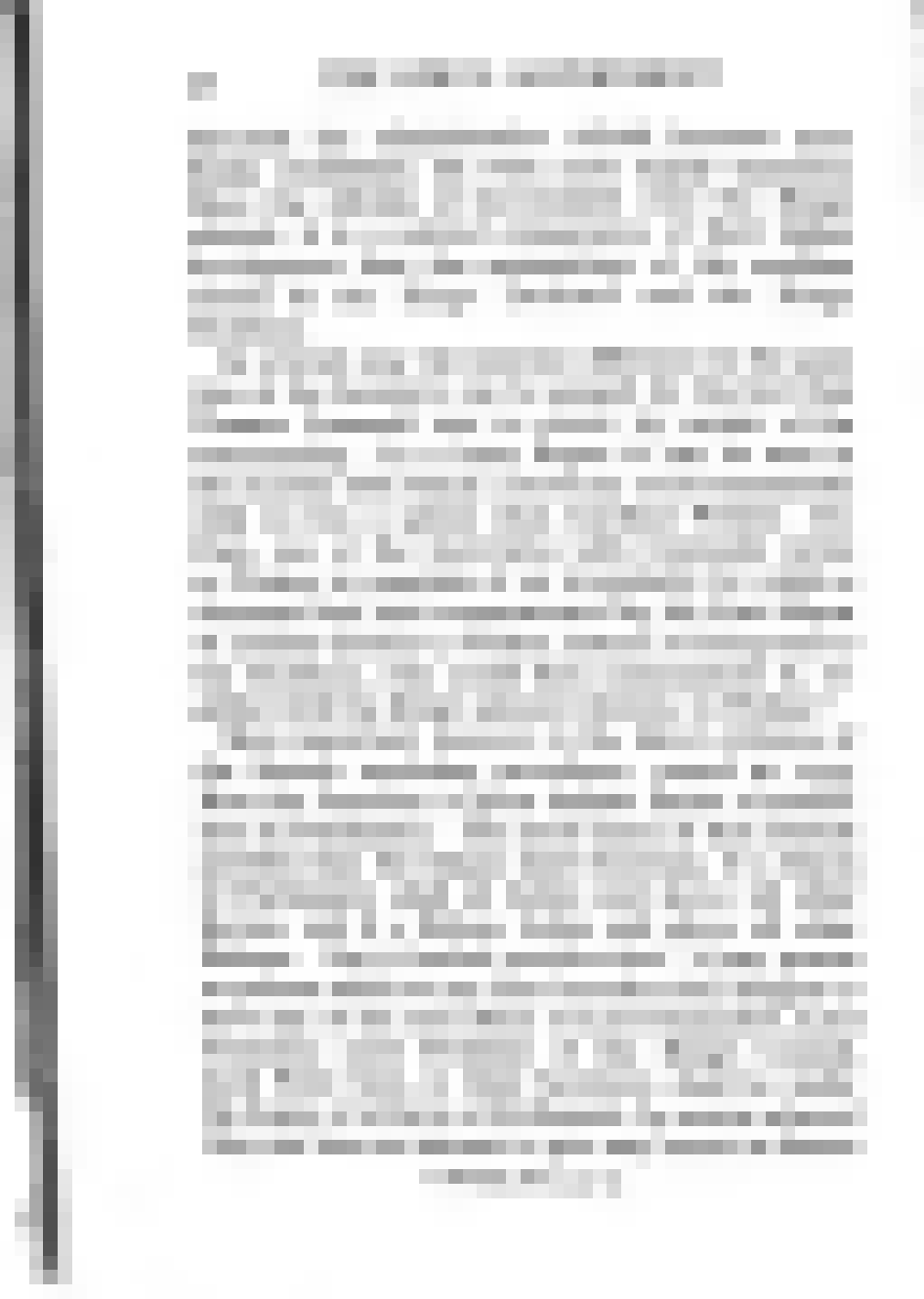
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In a broad way the immense difference in the position of the Secretary can be gauged by the fact that Thomas Cromwell rose to power by means of the secretaryship. In a lesser degree it can be seen in the security with which a Secretary could remonstrate with no less a person than Cardinal Wolsey. Dr. Pace, one of the Secretaries with Cromwell, writes to Wolsey to complain of an irregularity by which a document had been communicated by the Lord Mayor of London directly to Wolsey, instead of being sent to the Secretary, who would then communicate it, together with the King's pleasure thereon, to Wolsey.[1]

More important, however, is the direct evidence of the Statute regulating precedence, passed in 1539. Here the Secretary is given definite duties of attendance in Parliament. The sixth clause of that Statute provides that the King's chief Secretary, if a Baron of Parliament, shall sit before and above all other Barons, and if a Bishop, before and above all other Bishops. But it further provides that " if any person or persons which at any time hereafter shall happen to have any of the said offices of Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord President of the King's Council, Lord Privy Seal, or Chief Secretary, shall be under the degree of a Baron of Parliament, by reason whereof they can have no interest to give any assent or dissent

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in the said House, that then in every such case such of them as shall happen to be under the said degree of a Baron shall sit and be placed at the uppermost part of the sacks in the midst of the said Parliament chamber." [1] The first point to notice in this passage is that the Secretary has risen to be ranked with four of the greatest officers of State. The second is that his work is now of such importance that he is to sit in the House of Lords, even if he is not a member of the House. This comes out still more specifically in regulations of a few years later. It was ordained by these that when the King or the Speaker was present in the House of Lords, both of the Secretaries were to be on the woolsacks; on other days they were to sit alternately, week by week, one in the House of Lords and one in the House of Commons; but if important matters were before the Commons, both might be sitting there.

It is hardly necessary to speculate [2] whether it was contemplated, in these arrangements, that the Secretaries should not sit in the Commons unless they happened to have membership of that House. For from this time onwards the Secretaries are men of such standing that they would be more likely than not to be members of the House of Commons, unless they were members of the House of Lords. Thomas Cromwell, Wriothesley, Paget, Petre, Walsingham, Davison, Herbert, Cecil, Coke, Calvert, Conway, Windebank, Vane, Digby, Falkland, Arlington, Morrice, Trevor, Coventry, Sunderland, Leolin Jenkin, and Godolphin—these are names of Secretaries between the accession of Henry VIII. and the Revolution; and they may

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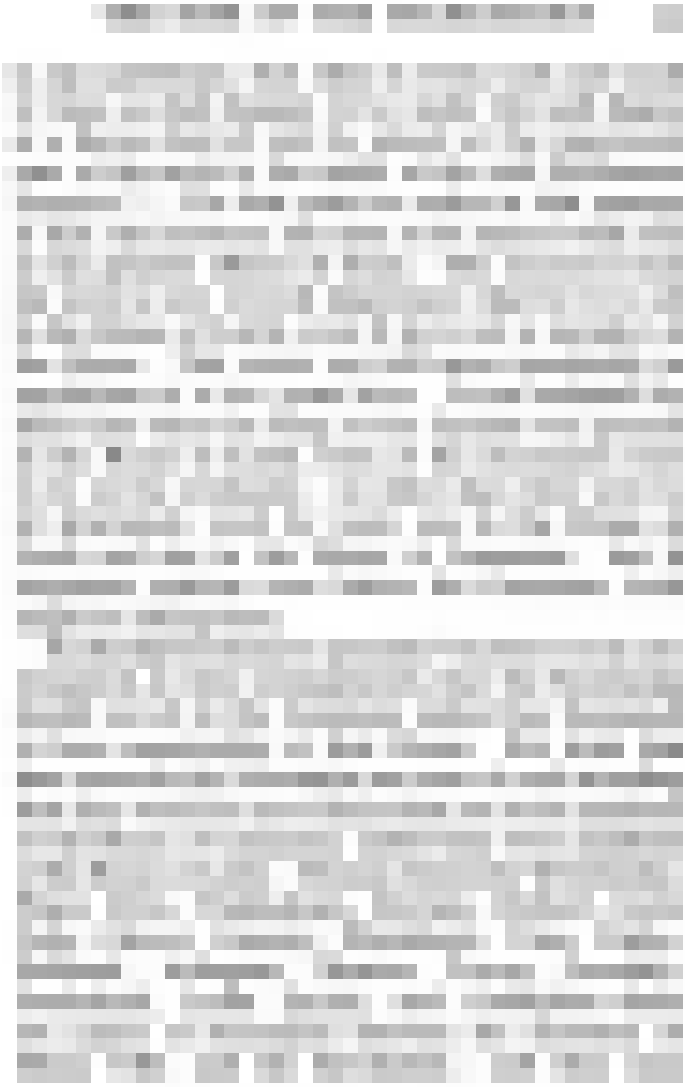
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Causes of the Secretaries' Advancement

How, it should be asked at this point, had such a change come about? Firstly, the Council, owing to the weakening of the great lords in the previous century, had become, though still nominally a check upon the Crown, in reality an "administrative machine of vast power, entirely in the hands of the Crown."[1] Secondly, the struggles of the House of Commons for the liberty of the subject had very largely taken the form of restrictions upon the use of the seals and regulations for the authentication of the Royal Sign Manual. Thirdly (though this is a point that has more force in the later part of the period now under discussion), the anxiety of the Commons being rather to keep the Crown from illegal taxation than to criticise the expenditure of the lawful revenue, a body of officials, rendered necessary by the increasing organisation of government, grew up dependent on the Royal will; and the most intimate channel of that will found the threads in his hands multiplying.

Let us take these points in more detail.

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from the Curia begins to weigh heavily. The fact that the officials of State were not servants of the Council made all the difference to their position now. They were servants of the Crown. Acting in that capacity as intermediaries between the Crown and the Council, they came to the Council with messages of a certain command, but took from it messages that could only be in the main of advice. How rapidly this process began to take effect may be seen by the attitude of the Secretaries after the death of Henry VIII. When we find Sir William Petre, one of the Secretaries, producing, at the accession of Edward VI., "orders and regulations for the despatch of public business and for matters to be brought before the King and Council," [1] we see already existing a power of initiation of policy which might, either under an inactive King, or by the increase of work beyond what even the most energetic King could deal with, become an avenue to executive control. That the Secretaries were acting as more than mere members of the Council is also implied in the fact that Paget, the other Secretary, was almost at the same moment defending himself against a charge of "over-assumption of power"; and shortly afterwards he takes upon himself to remonstrate with the Protector Somerset on his manner in Council, and to complain of his system of government.[2]

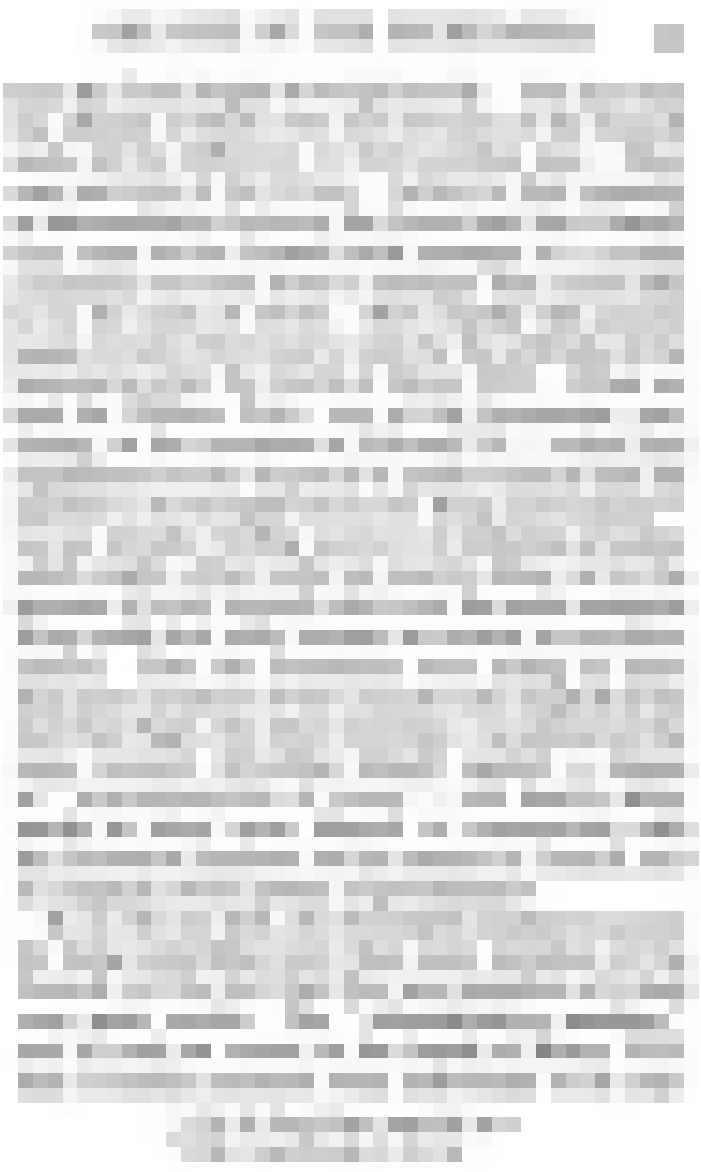
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II. *The Regulation of the Signet*

This point is interesting, because it puts us upon the track that is to end in the Parliamentary responsibility of Ministers of the Crown. The first regulations for the seals which concern the Secretaries are of the year 1443. It was then ordered, as a precaution against interference by the Crown with the course of law, that in the granting of petitions, bills, etc., when the King made any such grant it was to be delivered to his Secretary, who was to prepare letters for carrying it into effect, sealed with the King's Signet, and addressed to the Keeper of the Privy Seal, from whom they were to pass to the Chancellor as authority for the use of the Great Seal.[1] From further regulations made by statute in the reign of Henry VIII.[2] we perceive, not only the growing constitutional importance of the Secretary's office, but, incidentally, the size to which it had already grown as a department, and something of its practical organisation. Thus the preamble recites: "The King's clerks of his

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Grace's signet and privy seal, giving their daily attendance for the passing and writing of his Majesty's great and weighty affairs . . . having for their entertainment and their clerks no fees or wages certain for those offices, other than such fees as cometh and groweth out of the said signet and privy seal." The wording of this shows (i.) that the order of King's clerks still survived, apart from the clerks of the Crown in Chancery; but it survived as a superior rank, there being also simple "clerks"—no doubt the "sufficient writers of the King's Signet" mentioned in the reign of Edward IV.;[1] (ii.) that the staff of these second-grade clerks was not provided for officially, but the Secretary or Lord Privy Seal had to appoint and pay them; (iii.) that the Signet was now of at least equal importance with the Privy Seal, being in fact mentioned before it; an indication of the decline of the latter into a merely intermediary position is given by the fact that for some time Cromwell appears to have held both offices together.[2] After this preamble the statute orders that "any gift grant and other writing signed with the royal sign manual shall be in any wise first and before the same grant be passed under any of the King's said seals or other process made of the same brought and delivered to the King's principal Secretary or to one of the King's clerks of his Grace's signet for the time being, to be at the said office of the Signet passed accordingly." Letters of warrant are to be "subscribed with the hand of the clerk and sealed with

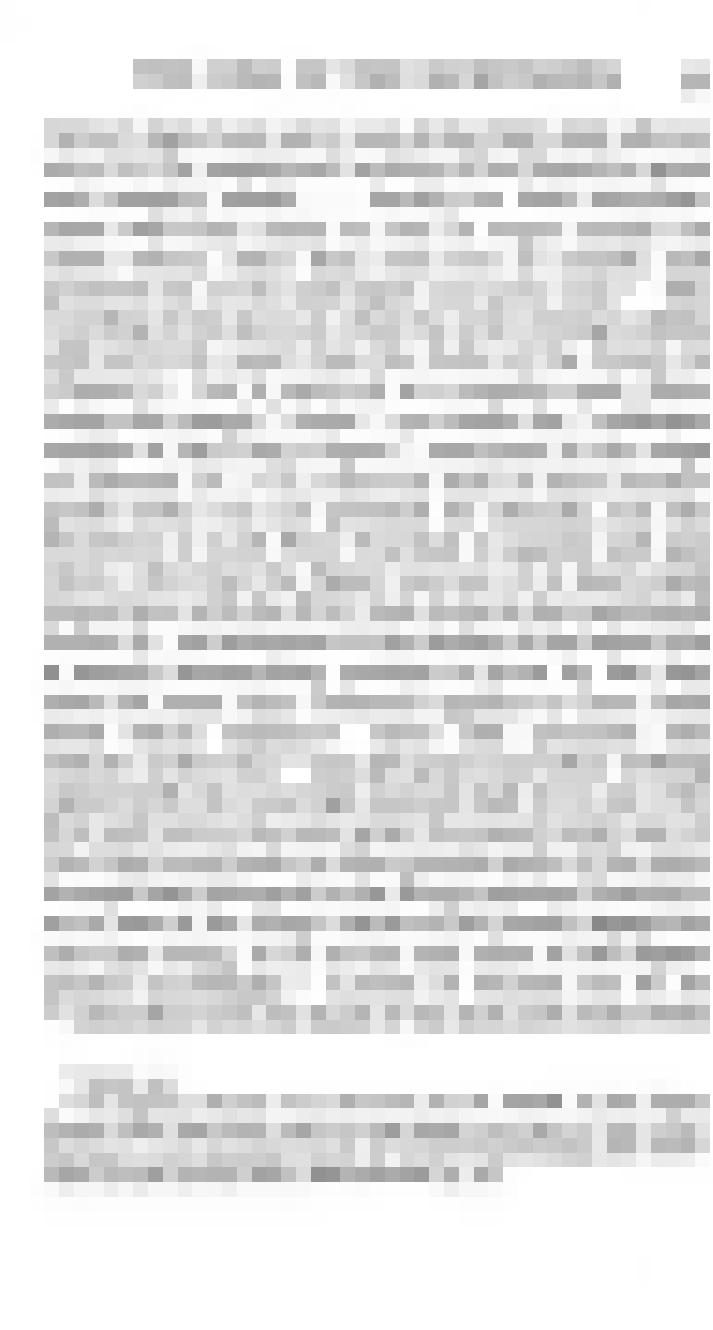
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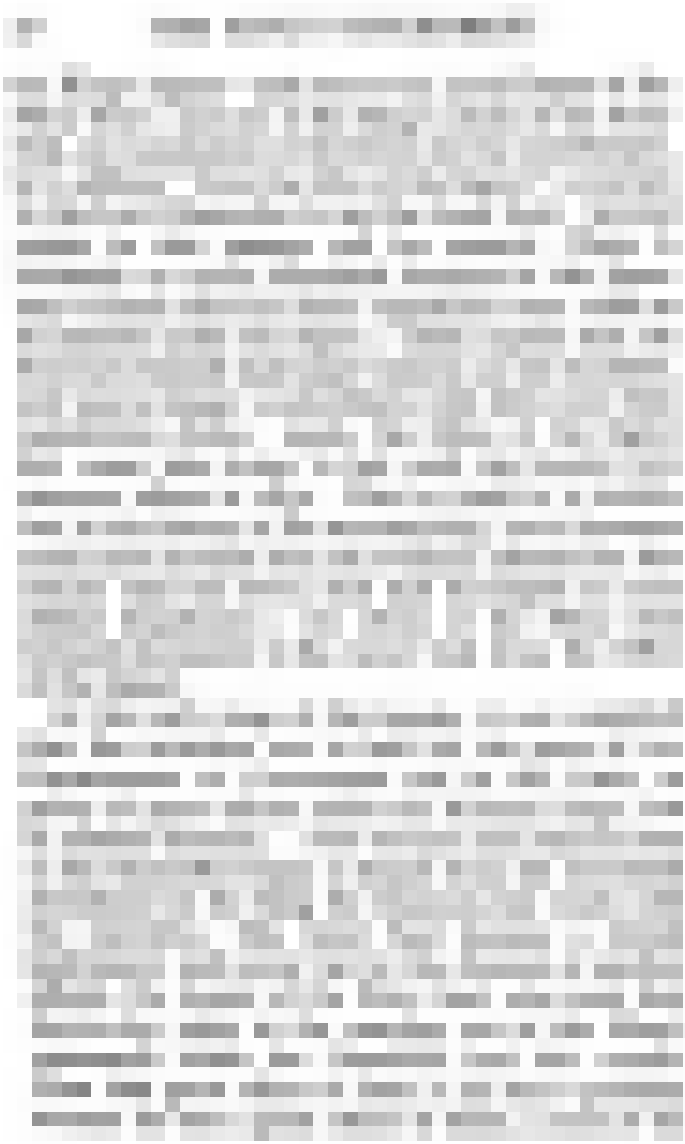


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At the early stage of this inquiry it was remarked that the intention was to look for the germ of our Departments of Government not in the Curia, or group of great officers under the Norman kings, but in another direction. Now we have seen that as soon as the Chancellor began to depart from his secretarial attendance on the King the Chancery lost touch with the executive. The Great Seal became a formal instrument, and power ran by the channel of another official, the keeper of the Privy Seal, who took that day-to-day place in the carrying out of the King's commands which the Chancellor had left vacant. Then this great officer of State in his turn—probably because he *was* a great officer of State, a lord of the

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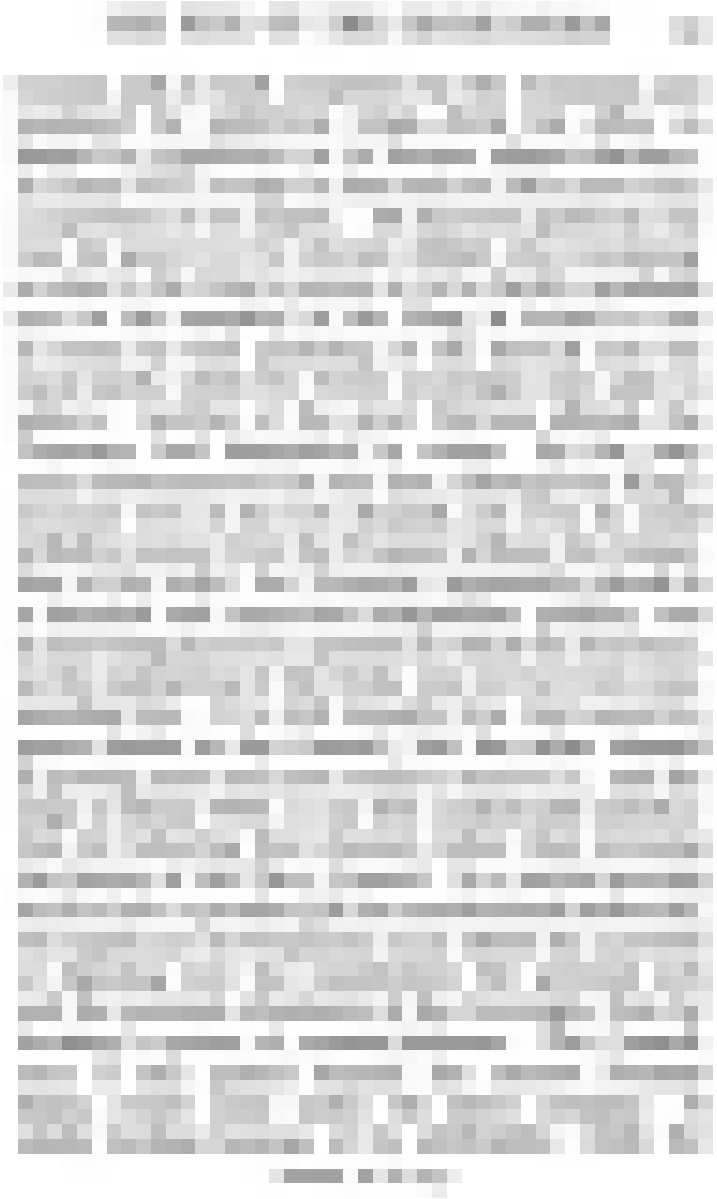


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For warrant upon a bill for *tales* or reward	12d.
For warrant for gift of any office	20d.
For warrant for pension, annuity, or wages	20d.
For warrant for a special livery or other perpetuity	6s. 8d.
For warrant upon every bill for a *conge* dester, royal assent, restitution of temporalities, donatives, advocations, presentation, or other ecclesiastical matter	3s. 4d.
For warrant upon a placard, licence, pardon, or sheriff's reward	2s. 0d.
For warrant upon a denizen	3s. 4d.
For warrant for keeping of an ideot	20d.
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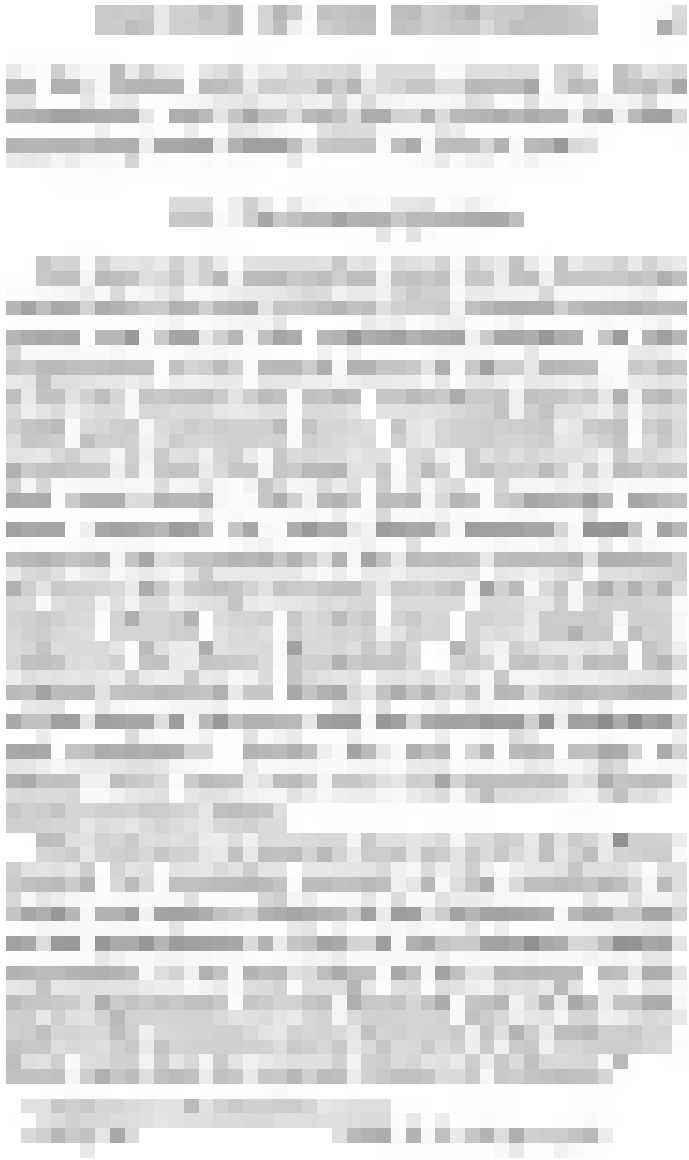
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III. *The Growing Officialism*

Not least of the approaches made by the Secretaries in and after the reign of Henry VIII. towards executive power was due to the considerable advance in the organisation of the armed forces of the Crown. This is for the moment the most interesting aspect of the third point mentioned above, in connection with the question of how the change in the Secretary's status had come about. The fact that the Commons were more concerned to check illegal taxation than to supervise the expenditure of the money lawfully finding its way to the King's Treasury meant that, as administrative officials were needed, they were simply provided by the Royal Household. We have seen the original allocation of King's clerks to the supervision of the ships of the navy and the checking of ordnance and munitions.[2] Before the end of the reign of Henry VIII. there were two well-organised departments for these affairs.

The Ordnance, as appears from an order of the Privy Council for rendering account of the munitions of Calais, was under a Master of the Ordnance, who had as his subordinates a Clerk of the Ordnance (chiefly responsible, if we may judge by the analogy of the naval department, for the financial part of the work and for the accounts), and a Surveyor of the Ordnance. Each castle had its separate Master of Ordnance.[3]

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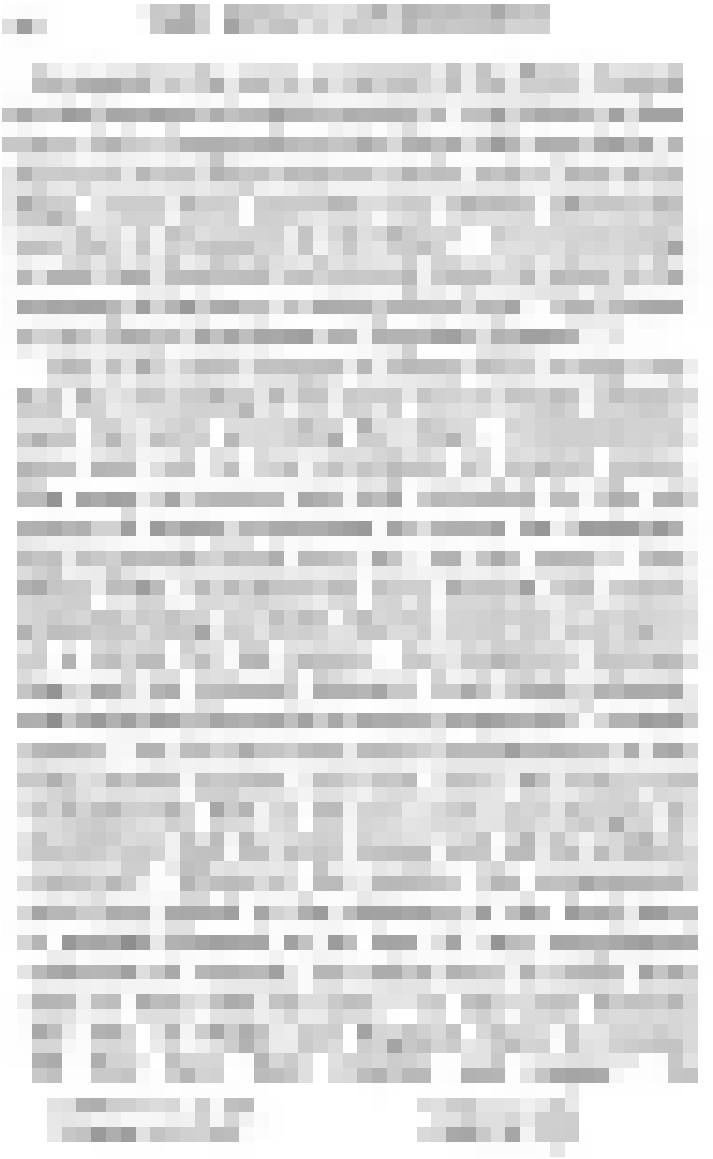
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In regard to the navy, a warrant of the Privy Council for the payment of certain monies in 1546 shows us that there was a Comptroller of the Ships with two clerks, a Surveyor of the Ships with two clerks, and a Clerk of the Ships, whose duty (and title very shortly afterwards) was that of Treasurer of the Ships.[1] It is interesting to add that Deptford had already taken its place in the economy of the navy; a minor official was "the Keeper of the King's Storehouse at Deptford Strond."[2]

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The Secretaryship's Inherent Opportunities

The reign of Elizabeth is as striking an epoch in the history of the Secretaryship as the reign of Henry VIII., though for a different reason. Henry VIII. gave statutory powers and responsibilities to the office in connection with the Houses of Parliament, and so prepared one line of the subsequent development of Ministries. Under Elizabeth the change was more subtle and more profound. The tenure of the Secretaryship by Cecil showed to what an extent a man of commanding personality and deliberate purpose could go behind the forms of government by the

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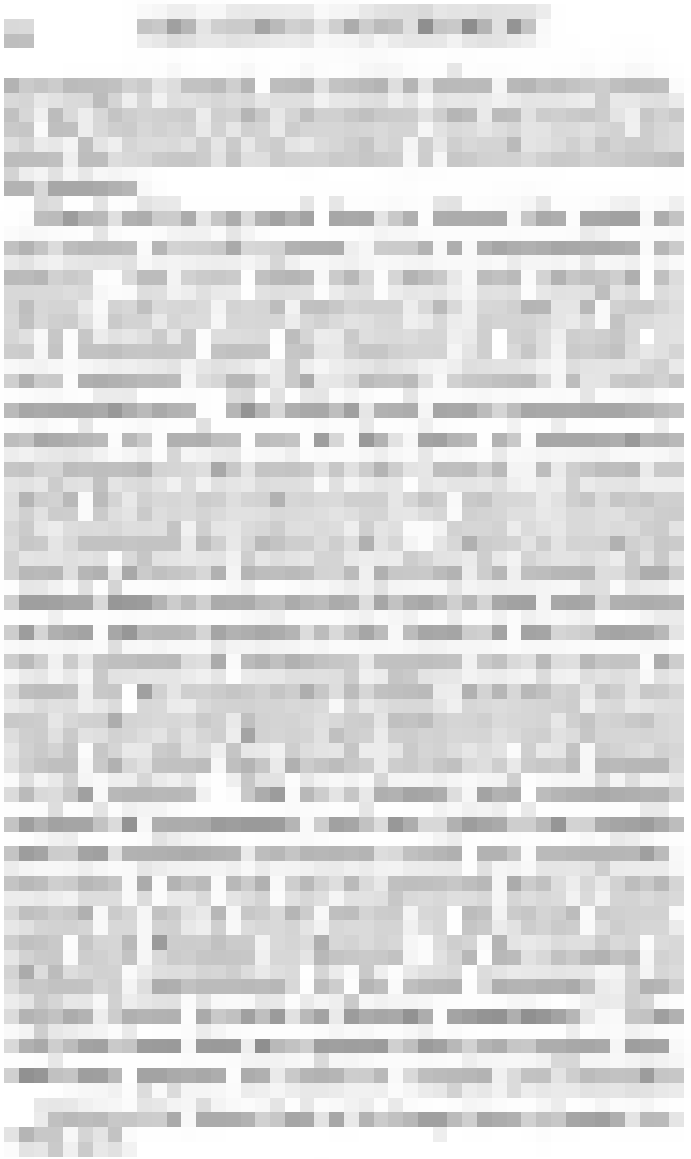
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There will be no need here to labour the point of the reality of Cecil's power; it is a commonplace of history. Yet how little the office had changed in theory, and how much therefore the quality of power in it depended upon the character of the holder, is very apparent from the various volumes of Cecil's correspondence. His boldest and most comprehensive schemes of policy are in the form of memoranda for proposals to be made to the Council; in points of detail he procures letters from the Queen conveying the commands he wishes to give. Again, he keeps his hand on affairs in Ireland by getting the Queen's high officials there to write private letters to him, and letters on less private matters to the Lords of the Council.[1] On a question of obtaining supplies for an army he writes to the Commander-in-Chief, sketching out for him a letter to the Queen quite different from the letter which the officer has already written to Cecil himself on the subject. This is a clumsy and roundabout method of government, and one which less capable and less ambitious successors could not manipulate. But that it was real can be gathered from a casual remark in one of Cecil's letters to his friend Carew, then Lord President of Munster. On the occasion of Herbert's appointment to be joint Secretary, Cecil advises Carew to write to Herbert sometimes: "This will take from him any opinion that you neglect him, and may prepare his mind to respect you hereafter

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The Secretaries and Official Correspondence

In using such sources as Cecil's correspondence and the diary of Francis Walsingham, another of Elizabeth's Secretaries, we are enabled to put our finger upon one obvious opening for the exercise of power. The Secretaries dealt with the letters and dispatches on affairs of State. As they had the receipt of arriving correspondence they could easily arrange (as we have seen Cecil doing) to keep certain letters to themselves, or to have other versions of them, dictated by themselves, sent in their place. It would be natural for officials absent on affairs of government to make sure that the Secretaries understood them and supported them, since their standing with the Crown and the Council depended in this way upon the goodwill of the Secretaries; and thus the latter would acquire, however unofficially, a considerable voice in policy. How far the Secretaries had an equally free hand in the outgoing correspondence is not so easily seen. Walsingham's Diary gives details of the receiving and sending of letters almost every day; but there are no means of distinguishing between letters written by instruction of the Queen or the Council and letters written on his own authority. Sometimes it would almost seem that he dispatched instructions and

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One small detail concerning the Signet in this reign seems to throw light on the changing position of the Secretaries, though only, it must be admitted, by conjecture. A warrant of Elizabeth's reign to the Graver of the Mint orders the making of "two signets of gold with the royal arms and scriptures," one of which is to remain in the keeping of Francis Walsingham.[4] It is curious that nothing is said as to the destination of the other. If the two Secretaries kept one each, there would be no reason for thus specifying the keeping of one. The simplest explanation would be that the other was kept at the Office of the Signet. This leads us to the conclusion that Cecil did not have a Signet in his charge; from which we might go on to

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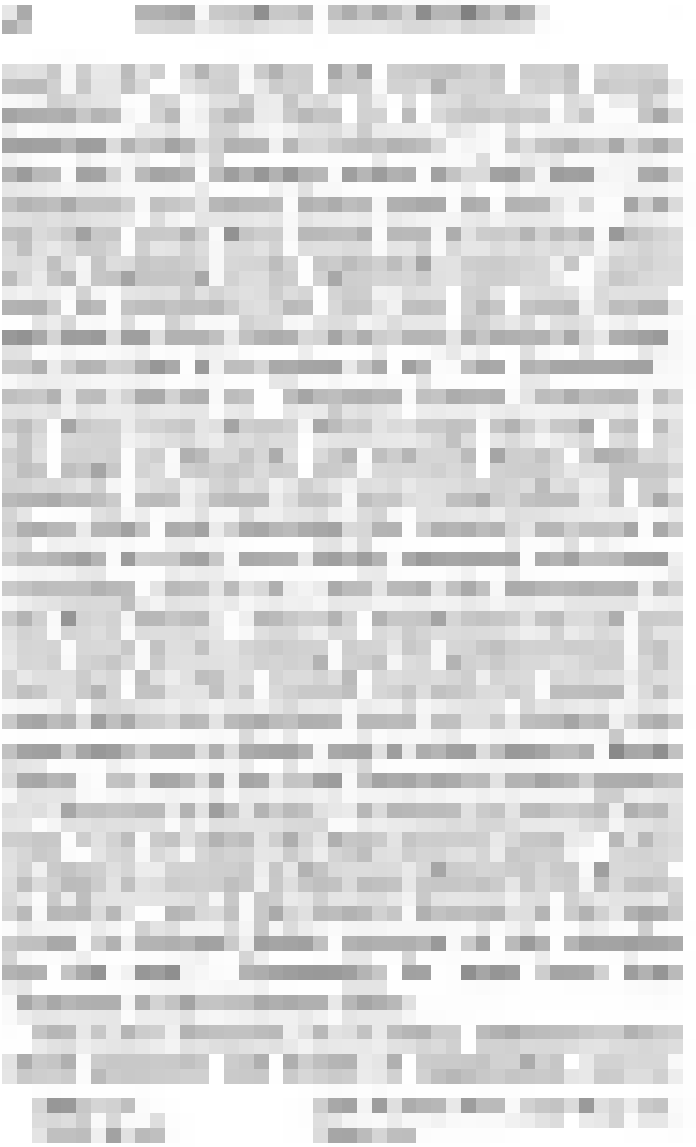
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The Secretaries and Foreign Affairs

But what chiefly emerges in this reign is the degree to which foreign affairs were beginning to lie in the hands of the Secretaries. From the very first they had been peculiarly connected with the King's business abroad, being often sent on embassies and missions. Even as late as the reign of Henry VIII. we find one

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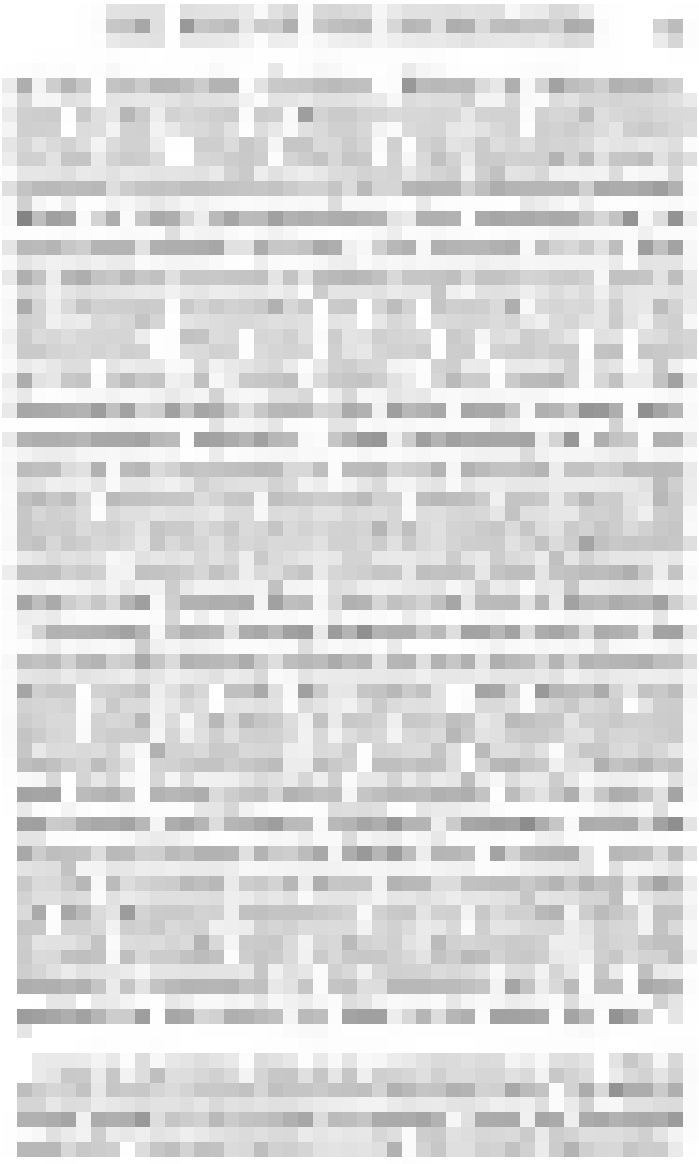
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Roughly speaking, these are the spheres of the Secretary for the South and the Secretary for the North in the eighteenth century, except that France was later assigned to the South.

Although the Secretaries were technically equal, there was evidently a customary seniority. One of Windebank's clerks, writing at the time of Coke's retirement, says: "Methinks we should not fail of the diet and seniority in secretaryship, though the other will have precedence as being treasurer." [1] The meaning of the reference to "the diet" is that the allowance for diet was divided unequally between the Secretaries; under William and Mary the senior received £730 and the junior £292; and no doubt there was a similar difference under Charles I. to which the clerk refers. Apparently there was also an implication of seniority in the nature of the business attended to by each Secretary. Thus later in the same letter the clerk writes: "I do not find that we have much more sign of seniority, Mr. Treasurer having full as much of the foreign business as Secretary Coke had." (Vane combined for some years the offices of Secretary and Treasurer.) This passage would imply that the foreign business was regarded as the more important; and that in turn supports the view just expressed that the Secretaries felt their power most strongly in that direction.

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going too far to see that assignment of duties already beginning.

The Secretaries and the Commons

Inevitably the constitutional struggles of this reign tended to sharpen and define the responsibilities of the Secretaries. For the first time that position, intermediary between the Crown and Parliament, which had been given them by Henry VIII., becomes vital. It was the Secretaries who had the task of conveying the King's financial demands to the Commons, of explaining the necessities of the Exchequer, and proposing Bills of Aid. And this leads us for the first time to the operation of Parliamentary considerations in the appointment and dismissal of a Secretary. Vane, who had succeeded Coke, stood for a forcing policy in the Commons, as against the more concessionary attitude of Strafford. He demanded the extreme measure of twelve subsidies, and announced to the House that a refusal would be followed by a dissolution. He was dismissed from the Secretaryship when Charles, taking heart from loyal speeches in the Commons, thought that less threatening methods might suffice.[1]

The chief interest of such passages is that we have in them (though the Commons really failed to perceive it) the germ of the solution of the problem with which the Commons had been struggling for centuries, namely,

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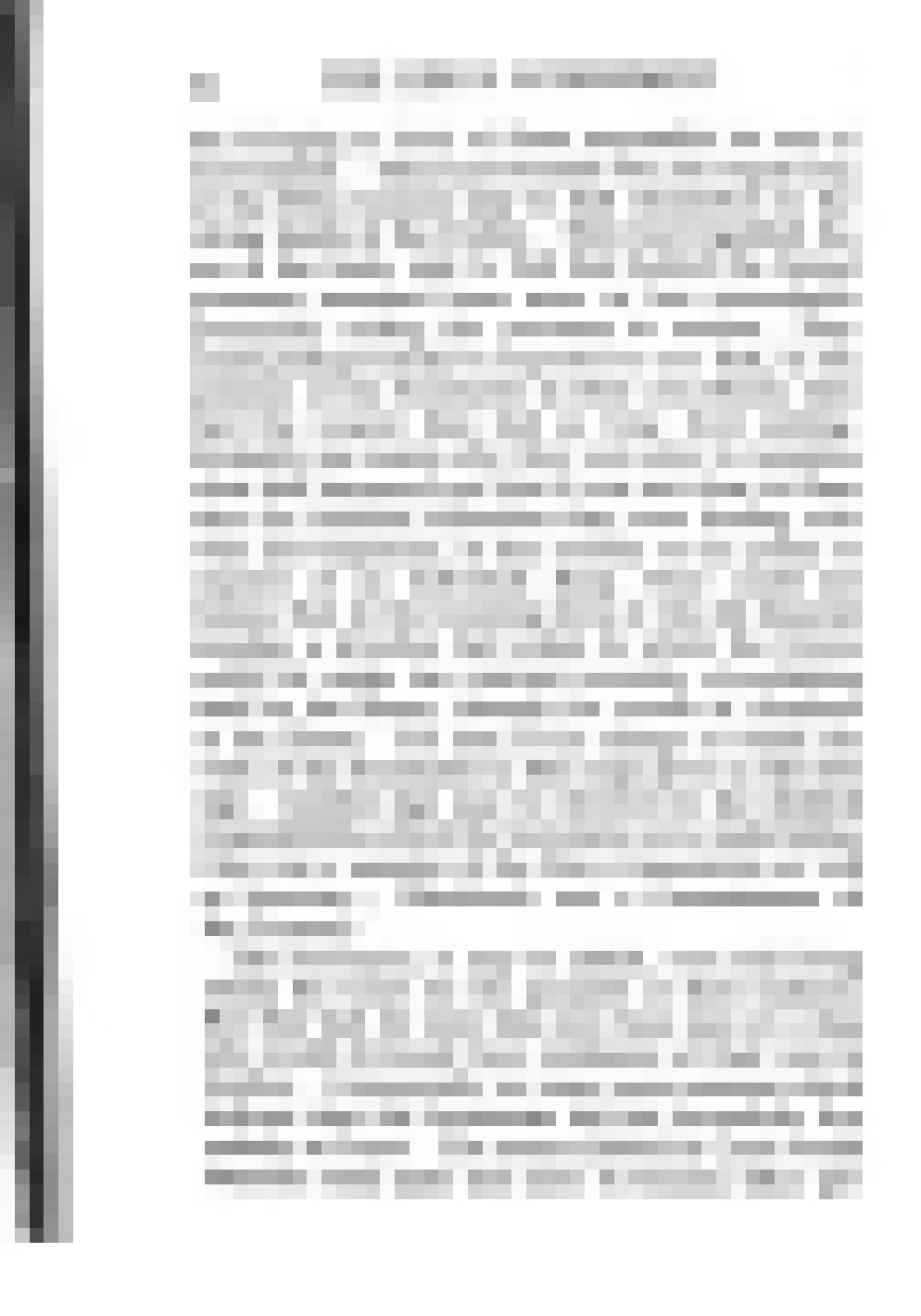
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the bringing to book of those responsible for acts of Government. They had wrestled with the vague form of the Privy Council, only to find themselves in the strong hands of the Tudors. They had regulated the use of the Seals, only to find that behind the formal processes remained some more or less unreachable personality setting the processes in motion. They could perhaps hardly be expected to see that, in the presence of the Secretaries in their own House, they had the weapon they had so long been seeking. Probably one reason why they were slow to recognise what had happened was that it was not clear to them that the financial difficulties they were dealing with were not temporary, or due entirely to the policy or caprices of an individual King. They could not foresee that in the breaking down of the old financial supplies a situation had arisen in which the Crown would be under the constant necessity of explaining itself to the House, through the mouth of members of the House. Yet that is the change of which the work of the Secretaries in this reign gives us the first sign. Another sign may be detected in the doubled responsibilities which the Secretaries were undertaking. Coke was a member of the Navy Commission as well as Secretary; Windebank was a Commissioner of the Treasury.

The Secretaries, it may be added, were still living within the Court for the purposes of their business. But they had for some time now been men of a class who would obviously have residences of their own in London. Consequently we come upon passages which indicate that the Secretaries did not necessarily live entirely at Court. The rooms allotted at Court would therefore tend more and more to become office pre-



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mises, and the way would be prepared for moving the Secretaries' department into offices of its own.

Departments under the Commonwealth

Under the Commonwealth the secretaryship, as would be expected from the circumstances of its rise to importance, suffers in most respects a decline. The office becomes that of Secretary to the Council of State, and in place of the men of family and standing who had been holding it, we find one Frost appointed to it, with an allowance of 40s. a day; his son is appointed his assistant at 20s. a day, and he has 26s. 8d. a day for four clerks. John Milton is employed as foreign Secretary. This was a minor post which had from time to time been allotted to one of the clerks in the Secretaries' department; and has caused confusion to some writers, who have been led to suppose that there were periods at which there were three Secretaries. Milton's predecessor was a subordinate of Windebank's, who carried on his duties under the Commonwealth for a time. (There could be no more striking proof than this of the firm establishment of the Secretaries' department in the work of Government.) The Secretary to the Council of State would naturally have less chance of exercising, even informally, any executive power than the Secretaries of a Sovereign; but Frost had clearly a good deal of power in financial affairs. Warrants by him and his son for the issue of money from the Exchequer are frequent.[1] Other

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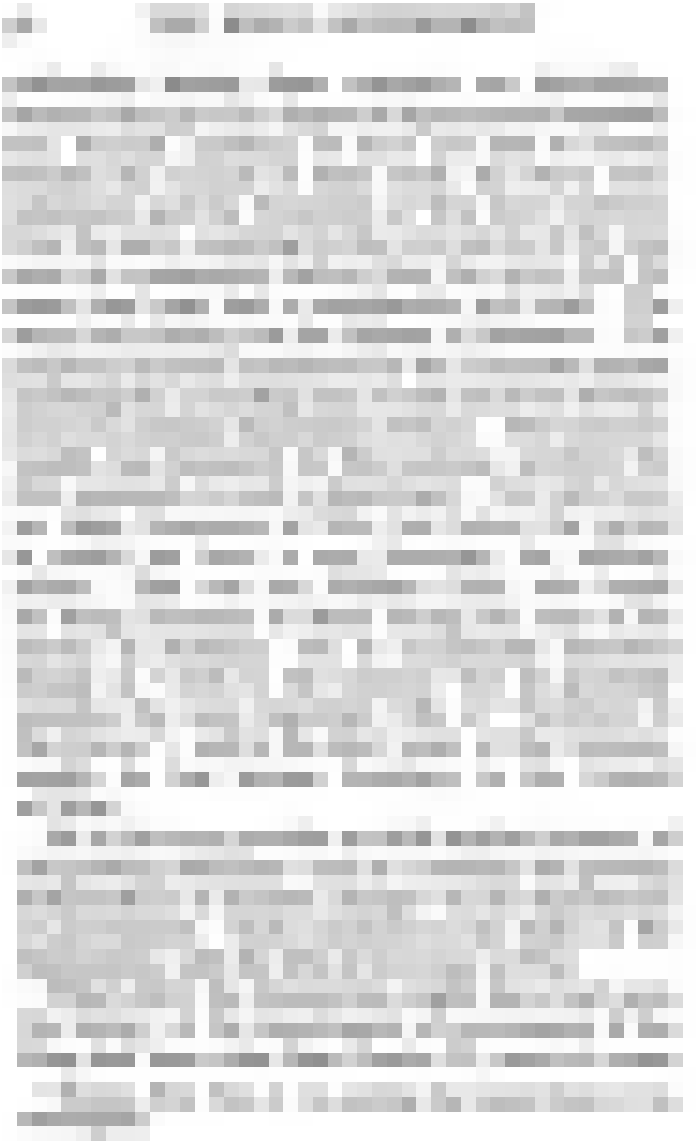


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He in his turn provides us with another instance of the growing officialism—and as a corollary the growing independence of dynastic changes—in the departments of government. Clark continued in his duties at the Restoration, with the title of Secretary at War.

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Army Office after the Restoration

We may take first the case of the departments for the armed forces, since the state of affairs in them was largely responsible for the state of affairs in the others.

The army department became a wholly new thing. The constant disputes throughout the reign of Charles II. as to the keeping of a standing army need not concern us. It is sufficient for our purpose that Charles and James II. also did succeed in keeping some sort of army. But the provisions for its administration

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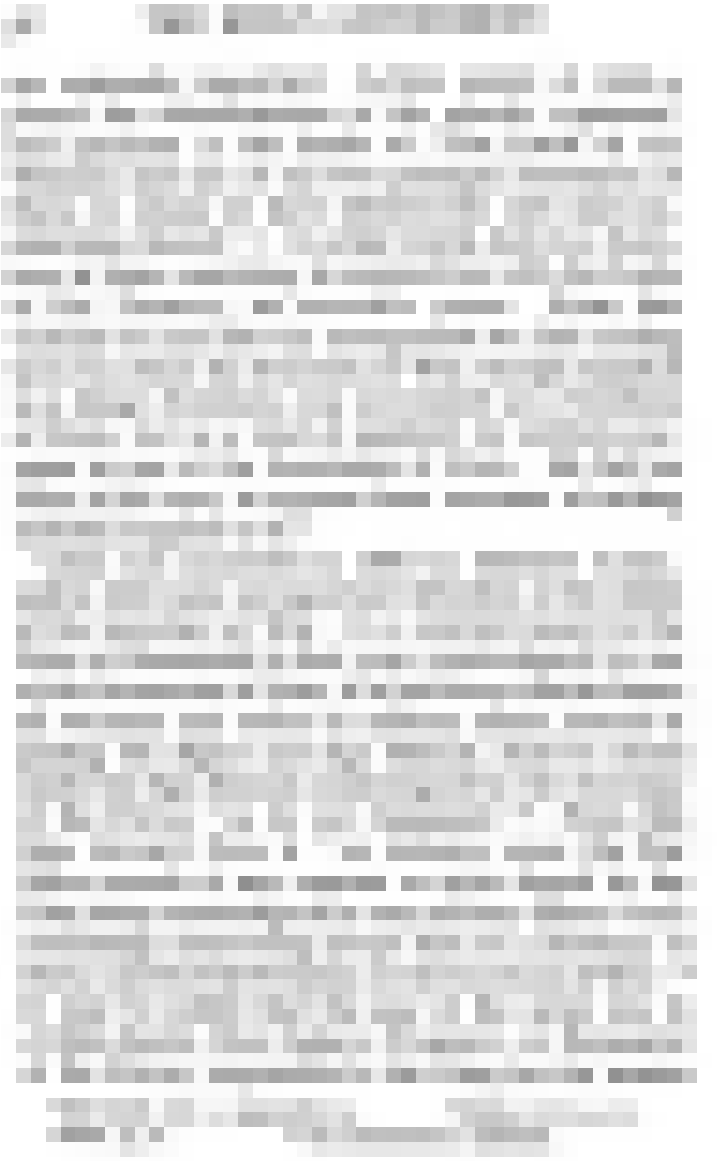
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Of the navy department at this time we have, of course, many glimpses in Pepys's *Diary*. It had not changed essentially since the Tudor constitution of it. At the head was the Lord High Admiral; then came the Treasurer, the Comptroller, and the Surveyor of the Navy. The Clerk of the Ships, or Clerk of the Navy, has become Clerk of the Acts,—the office held by Pepys, and later on combined by him with that

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of Surveyor of the Victualling. Finally, there were three Commissioners of the Navy, who seem to have been concerned chiefly with provision and inspection of stores and victuals.[1] The Navy Office, used, as it would appear from Pepys's references, by all these officials, was still in Crutched Friars, with a Victualling Department at Deptford, and subordinate offices at Chatham, Portsmouth, etc.[2] Besides the premises at Deptford, there was a Victualling Office. Pepys does not mention where this was; but as it is stated to have been on Tower Hill early in the eighteenth century, it may be presumed to have been there in Pepys's time. Besides these offices, we have references to an "Admiralty Office" at Whitehall. This would appear to have been an office in the Palace premises (Pepys sometimes calls it "the Duke of York's chamber"), such as the Secretaries of State had, to which the officials and Commissioners of the Navy Board were summoned by the Lord High Admiral for consultations on naval policy at large and estimates for money. When on the resignation of the Duke of York in 1673 the post he had held was put into commission, this office became that of the Lords of the Admiralty, who continued to exercise this general direction. As long as there was a Lord High Admiral, he seems to have depended for secretarial work upon the staff of the Navy Office; but after the Lords of the Admiralty were commissioned a Secretary of the Admiralty appears, with a staff of seven clerks, in the Admiralty Office.[3]

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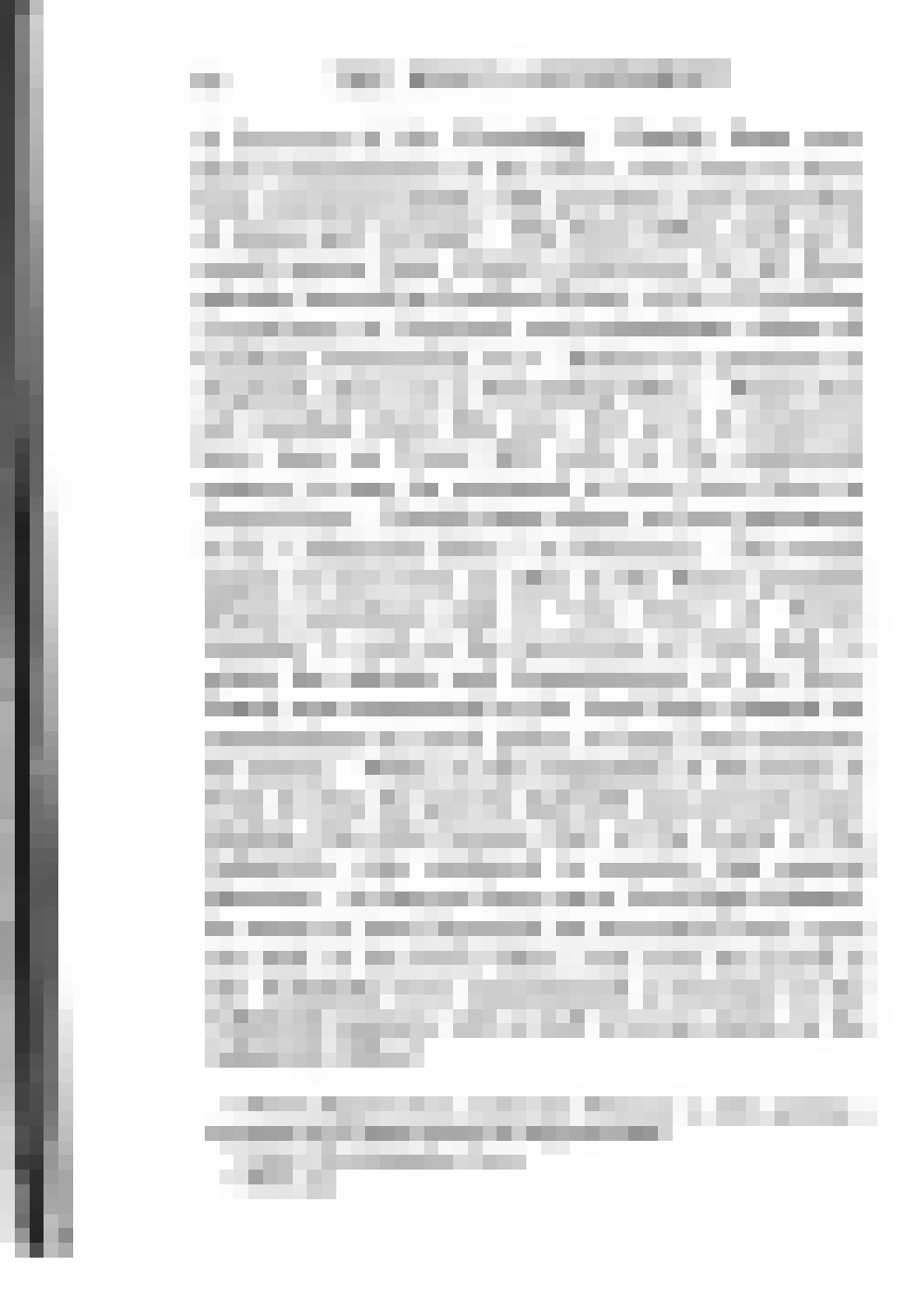
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The Treasury Departmentalised

Developments in the Exchequer also call for notice. They follow naturally upon the subjects just discussed, because it was the increasing tendency of the expenditure on armed forces to become permanent which principally demanded the reorganisation of Exchequer business.

Up to this point we have not been much concerned with financial matters. All the revenues, whether the hereditary revenues of the Sovereign (like the revenues from Crown domains and manors, or the ancient Customs dues on wool and leather), or granted to each Sovereign for life (like the Tunnage and Poundage), or even those granted for special occasions of warlike expenditure, were regarded as paid to the Sovereign personally. His officials dealt with them. His Exchequer of Receipt tallied the paying in of money, his Exchequer of Account held audits; and both were staffed by the successors of the old "King's clerks" of the Household, under the King's Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Lord Treasurer is the King's Treasurer, even after he has become in a sense a public official.[1] No distinction was drawn between money used for the King's privy purse and that used for what we should now call public services.

The only changes for three hundred years had been changes in minor detail. Various attempts were made to secure proper audit; and as the departments became more highly organised, the process of supplying them

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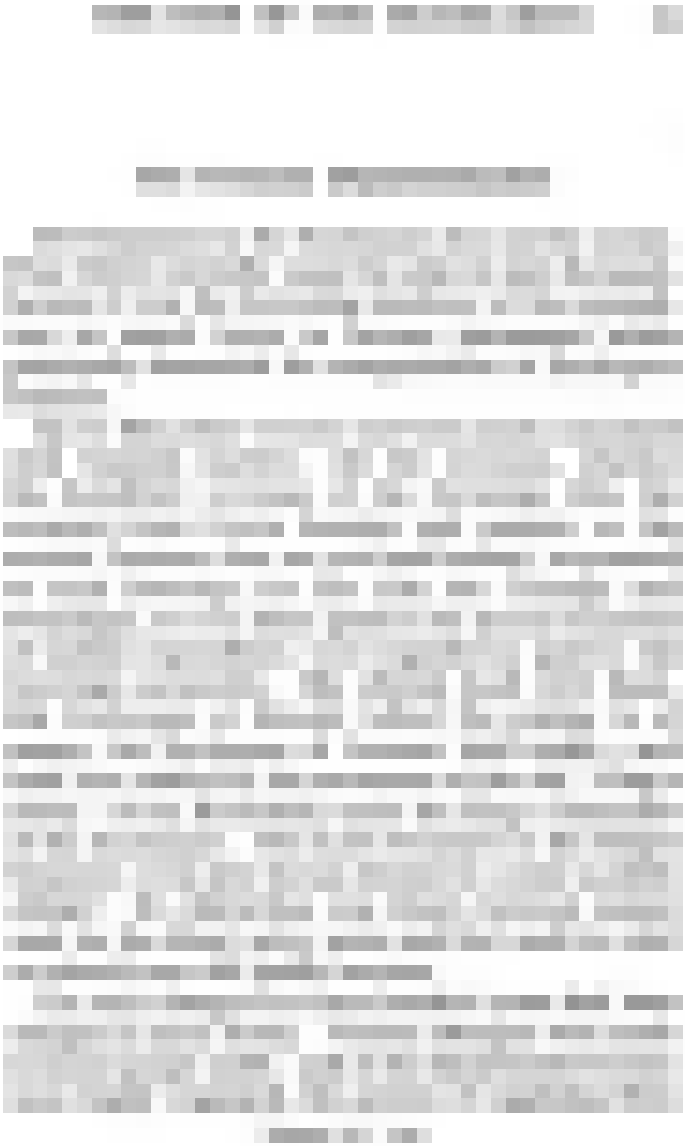
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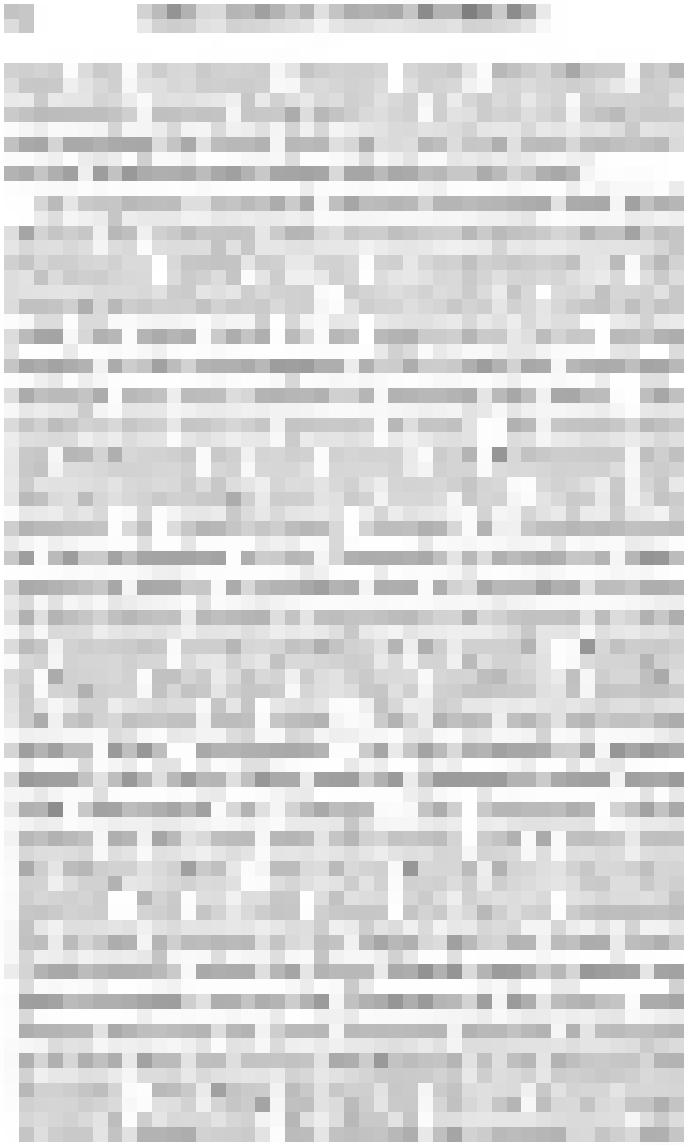
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As expenses increased various Sovereigns had tried devices for enlarging their revenues without consulting Parliament, chiefly by way of readjustments of the taxes granted them for life. Now Charles II., confronted with the same need in an aggravated form, owing largely to the extravagance of his Court life, could not attempt any such method of meeting the need. His father's fate was too present to him. He could only ask Parliament for more money, and Parliament had also new knowledge since the Civil War. One of the greatest of constitutional changes is foreshadowed in the inclination of the Commons to attach to their grants in 1666–7 a condition that a Committee of nine of their House should be empowered to inspect on oath the accounts of the spending of the grants. Passages in Pepys's *Diary* show to what a condition of muddle the old system had come. The King was borrowing money from "goldsmiths" on the strength of grants ahead; the Navy Office and the Ordnance relied upon bills discounted on 'Change. The Commons voted money for the wars with the Dutch, and it went into the King's coffers. The Navy Board drew what they wanted. But so could others who had at command the proper processes of the Signet and the Great Seal. Consequently, when the Navy Board come to make up their accounts, we see the Treasurer of the Navy, and Pepys, and even the Lord Treasurer himself, in despair as to how they are to face Parliament on its demand for accounts. The King has had for the war in two years a sum of £5,590,000; the officials can account for only



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This proposal had the support of the Treasurer, Lord Southampton; and thus the Treasury begins to be a department engaged, not in the keeping of money, but in the more important task of devising means for raising taxes and recommending those means to the Commons. The practice, begun on certain occasions in Charles II.'s reign, of putting the Treasury into commission, helped to break down the personal character of the King's expenditure on civil government, and to make it more of a public function.

It will be convenient to note under this head the appearance of a form of raising money which was to be the foundation of a great department, The establishment of a system of posts under Charles II. was largely devised as a monopoly which should bring profit to the Exchequer. At the present stage it is no more than a section of Treasury work, and we have only to record its commencement.

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The Secretaries after the Restoration

It remains to consider the position of the Secretaries of State under Charles II., and here too we find great and rapid changes. The Secretaries have for some centuries past been regularly members of the Privy Council; and we now find it laid down that upon appointment a Secretary is sworn, as such, of the Council.[1] In the document which gives this fact there appears also the statement that Secretaries of State are by right made Justices of the Peace for all counties of England. But more important than these formal dignities is the fact that the Cabinet Council, a body which appears first in Charles I.'s reign, has begun to supplant entirely, for executive purposes, the Privy Council and the Committees of Council;[2] and the Secretaries seem always to have been present at Cabinet Council meetings. These were the people who settled, with the help of officials called in from the Navy and Ordnance Offices, how much money should be asked from Parliament, and how Parliament should be induced to grant it.[3] They are meetings of Officers of State, usually the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, the two Secretaries, and one or two of the higher officials of the Navy or Ordnance Boards who were members of the Council. Both the Secretaries were members of the first and second Boards of Admi-

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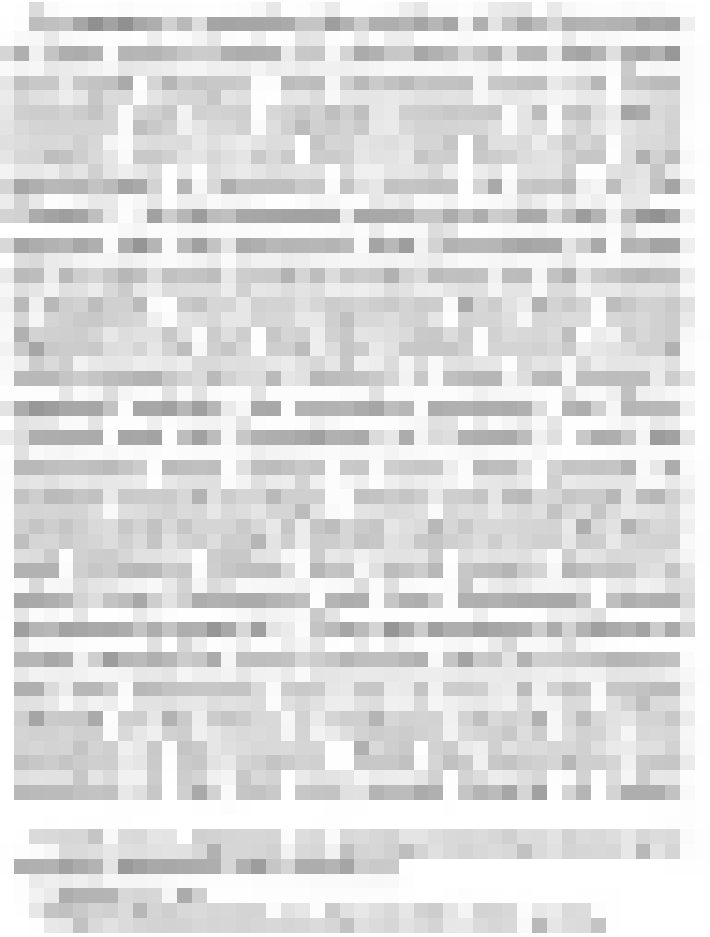
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So far had the Council, as a body, declined in power that even the Committee which gives most distinction to the reign, and had a lasting future, is only in essence a body advisory to the Secretaries.[3] This is the Committee on Trade and Plantations. It had had some predecessors, since the reign of James I., when the successful plantation of Virginia added permanent colonial responsibilities to the Crown. But the fact that James's Committee sat at Haberdashers' Hall shows that it was regarded rather as a body advisory to the merchants with interests in the colony than as a matter of government. Charles II.'s Committee, while designed in some degree for the assistance of the great privileged trading companies, which were attaining their zenith, was no less intended for administrative purposes.

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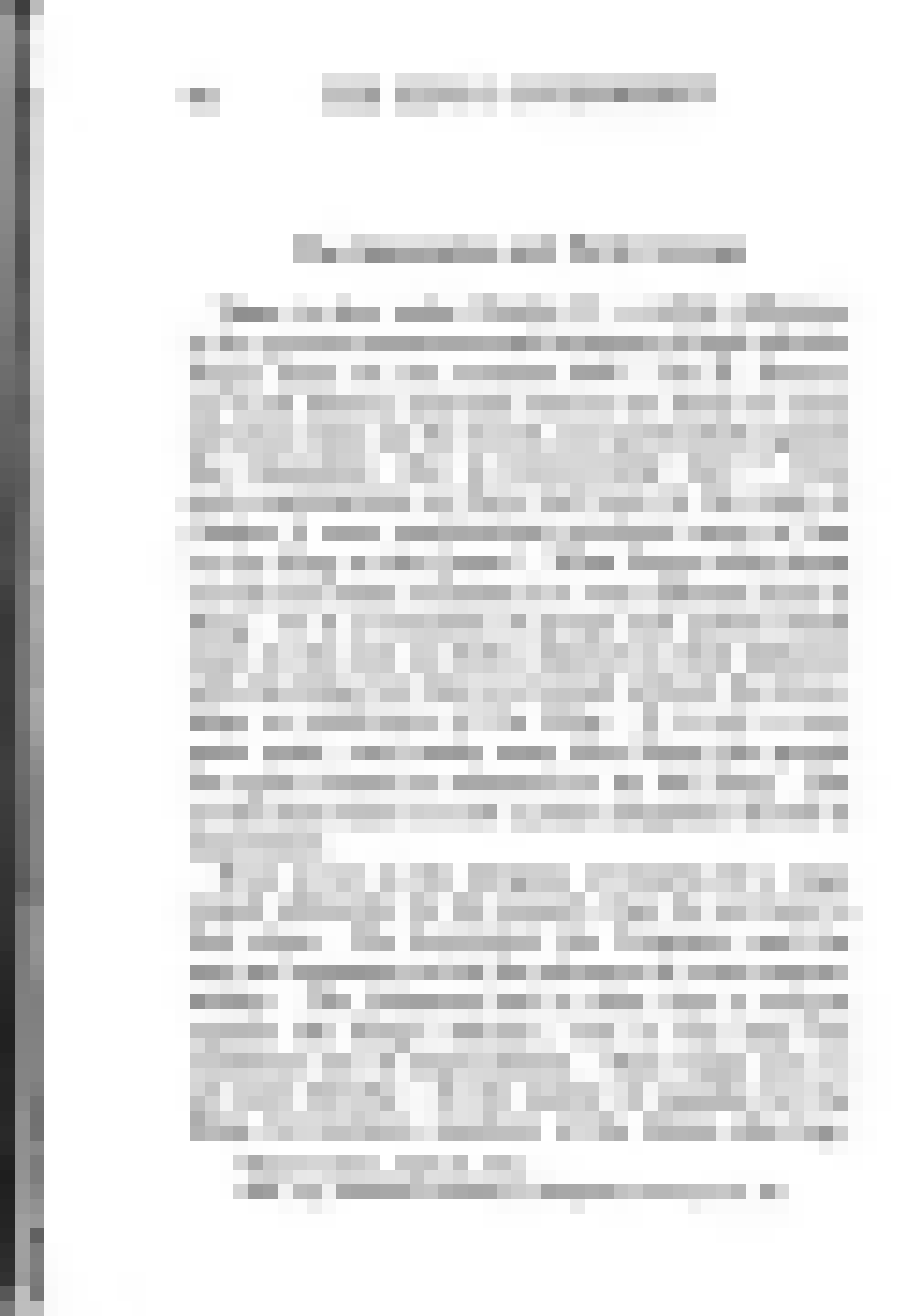
The Secretaries and Party Groups

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Even so far as the intrigues of Charles II.'s reign looked ultimately for his support, they do not look to that alone. The Secretaries, the Treasurer, and the rest are beginning to feel the advance of a new responsibility. The Commons had in older days a weapon against the King's officials; but it was only the cumbrous one of impeachment. They begin now to act more directly. In the matter of supplies for the King, for instance, members of the House who hap-

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CHAPTER III

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY: 1688–1800

THE hundred years succeeding the Revolution of 1688 are curiously instructive in regard to the English habit of political development. The reality of power was laid hold of by Parliament long before the theory was assailed. Ministers were brought under an increasing responsibility, while their subordinates, secure in the old theory of Government, remained a close corporation of sinecure offices and corrupt appointments. Another instructive point is that no one understood the changes while they were actually taking place. At the very moment when circumstances were bringing about the dependence of Ministers upon the House of Commons, that House was in the mind to expel from its membership all officials of the King and of Government.

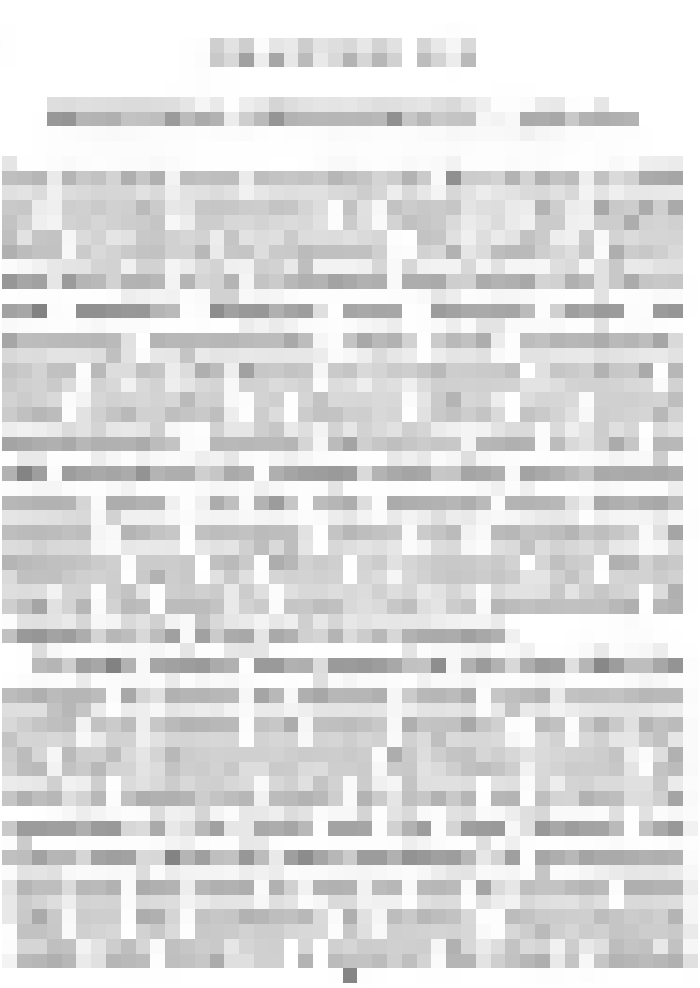
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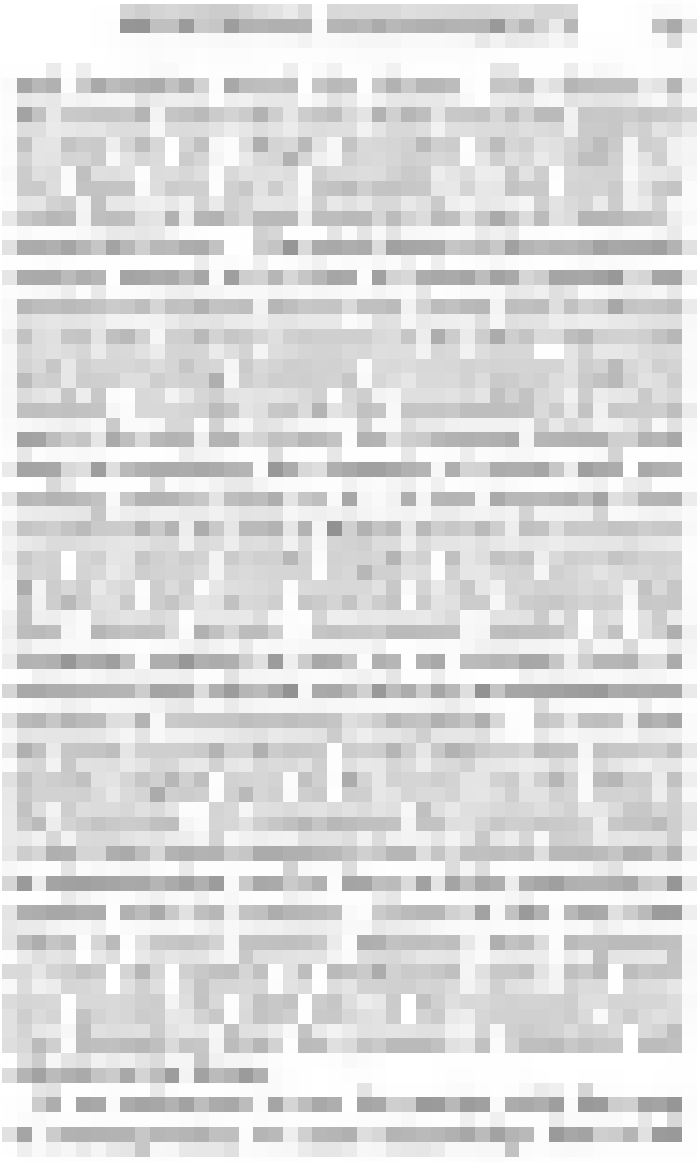
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and favourites round the throne. The decline of the Council under the early Tudor monarchs appeared to clear the air. Single favourites there might be; but these were never impossible to deal with, nor could they, as had been found in the case of Charles I., screen the Crown. The whole lesson of the seventeenth century seemed to be that in balancing against one another two distinct forces—the Crown and its officials on one side, and the Commons on the other—the truest and most lasting steadiness of Government might be reached. In other words, the responsibility of action was to lie with the Crown, the Commons finding their duty in regulating the channels of action and prescribing certain limits to it. It has frequently been remarked that the Bill of Rights and the Act of Succession are almost entirely negative in their provisions. It had, in fact, never occurred to the Commons that they should govern. Government resided in the Sovereign, assisted at first by an advisory body of nobles and high officials, and later by an administrative machine of ever-increasing complexity. To see that the purse and the liberty of the subject were not too heavily weighed upon by the Crown was the ideal of the Commons. In consequence the Commons wished to feel their hands completely free to attack delinquents in administration, and to have as little connection as possible with the machine. Hence at the very time when in actual practice Ministers were beginning to take the opinion of Parliament more and more into account, the chief idea of the Commons was to free themselves from the presence of Ministers and officials in the House.

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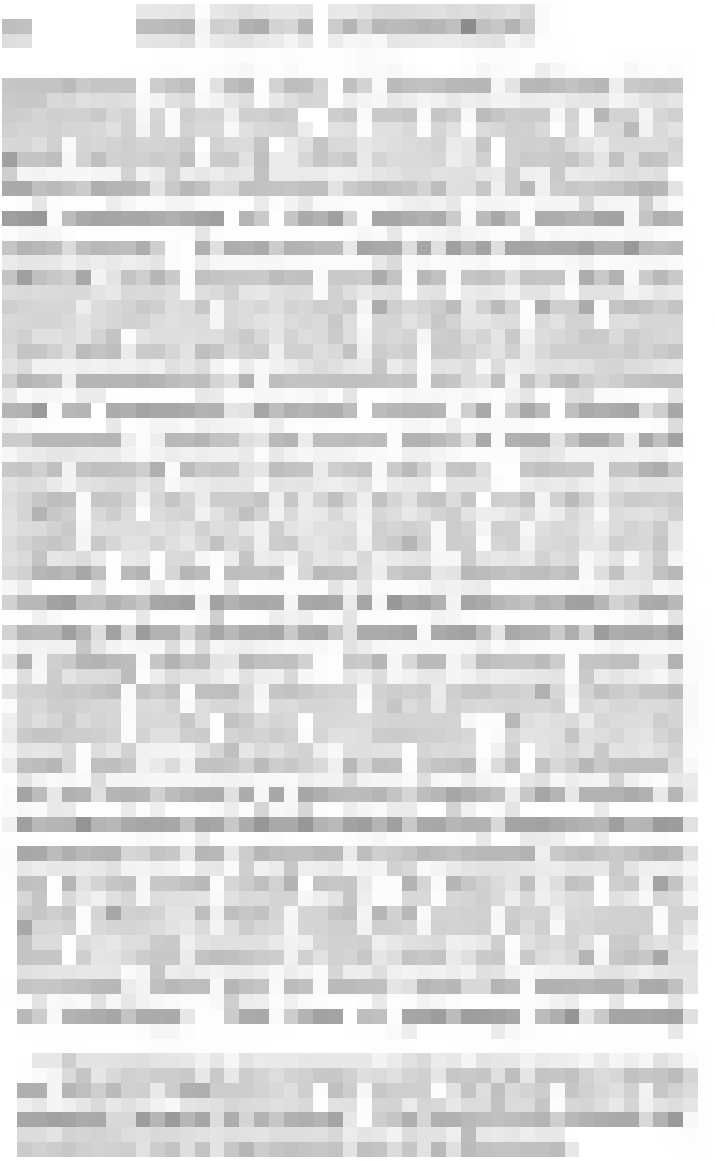


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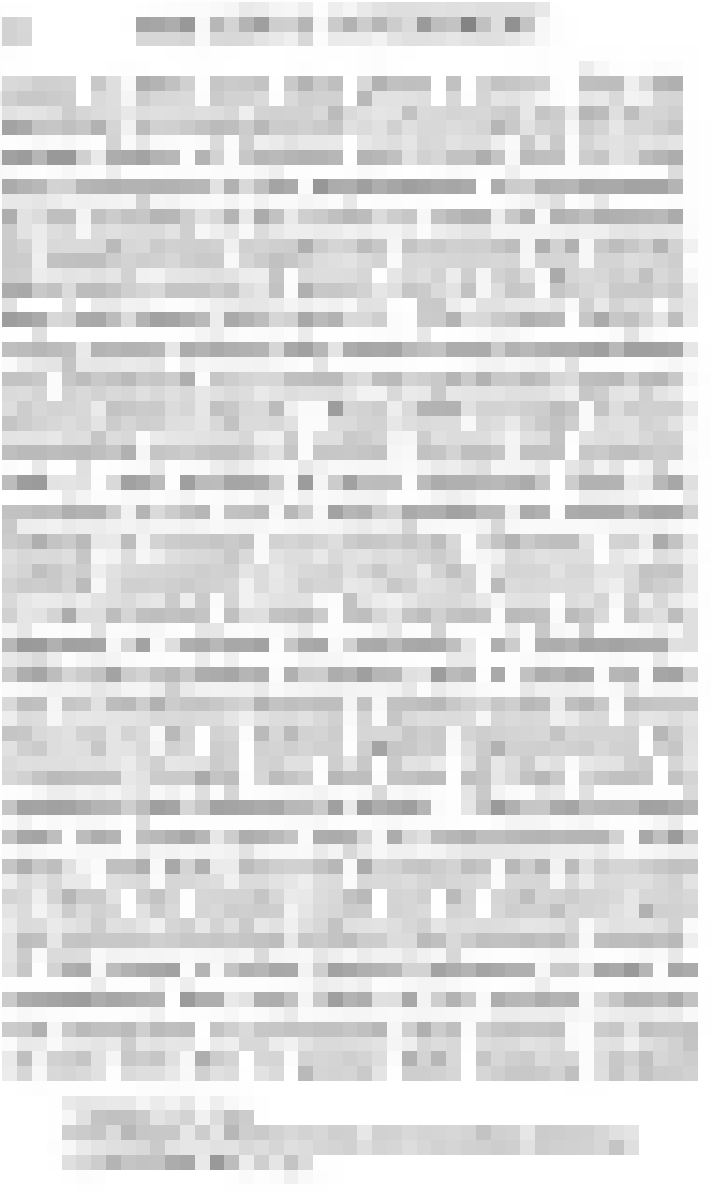
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In the early years after the Revolution the Commons seemed, however, to have failed in their object. In a debate at the close of 1692 on the ill management of the war, Members complained that they could not ascertain upon which advisers of the Crown to fix responsibility. After all, the people who had to account to the Exchequer were but administrative officials carrying out orders; it seemed impossible to lay permanent hold upon the persons from whom the preliminaries of those effective orders came.

The Value of Parliamentary Support

The process by which the difficulty was solved was already in operation, though still unrecognised. The key to it is the fact that the new ring of advisers consisted not of great lords whose position made them of the Council, but of men who only entered the ring by being appointed to certain offices, and those offices

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held during the King's pleasure. Men appointed may become men dismissed. Among the elements tending to dismissal, a lack of cordiality on the part of the Commons towards an Officer of State was before long discovered by the rivals of those in office to have some effectiveness. Throughout the eighteenth century it remained effectiveness of a vague and general kind. No direct step could be taken against a Minister except by impeachment; his salary was the King's affair, and could not be touched as long as he satisfied the King. When George III. insisted on his right to appoint Ministers at his pleasure, and not at that of the Commons, the latter had no more real answer to him, strictly speaking, than they had had to Richard II. in similar circumstances. But in a general way a man's tenure of office could be made so tiresome to him and his colleagues, and so worrying to the Crown, by means of influencing the House of Commons against him, that such influencing came to be a regular part of the business of politics.

The Ring of Heads of Departments

When we look further at this ring of official advisers of the Crown, we perceive new characteristics in it. It meets no longer as a group of detached individuals, but as a group of heads of active departments. The departments function almost automatically; the direction in which they act is determined by the decisions of the King and this group of their heads. Originally, as has been remarked, the Exchequer





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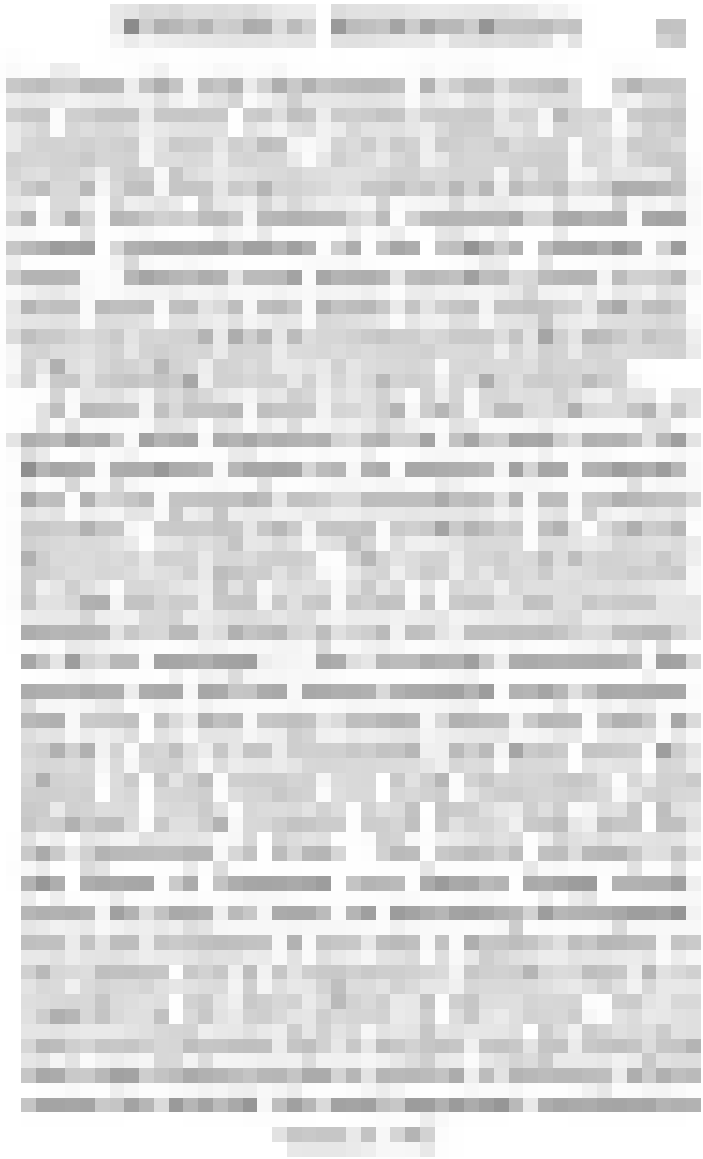
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had been the only department in this sense. Next, the armed forces of the Crown began to have their permanent civil staffs; and the Secretaries of State had by this time acquired considerable staffs, engaged in the day-to-day business of embassies abroad and formal communications of the King's pleasure at home. Therefore even before executive power in the strict sense lay in the hands of the King's officials, there was a good deal of practical power in the direction of the standing forces, so to speak, of government.

A more striking point is the fact that this ring of advisers, while dependent still in the main upon the King's pleasure, begins to be subject in its composition to the purposes and inclinations of its powerful members. During the reign of William III., indeed, this is not very apparent. The case of Lord Normanby in 1694 shows that even when a man had become a member of the Cabinet he was not necessarily present at all its meetings;[1] the Sovereign summoned the meetings and did not always summon every member. But even in that reign certain offices were held to entitle a man to be summoned, and these were the offices of Lord Keeper (or Lord Chancellor), Lord President of the Council, Lord Privy Seal, and the two Secretaries of State. The control obtained by the House of Commons over finance brings about, before the reign of Anne, an interesting development. The Lord Treasurer is not only a regular member of the Cabinet, but is so important a member that he is regarded as the chief adviser of the Crown. Or we may record the same fact in another way, by observing that when Harley reaches a position of influence which makes his attitude the most important consideration

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in the group around him, he takes the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. As the eighteenth century progresses we find increasingly communications from the principal man in the Cabinet to his friends or political associates offering them some post with a seat in the Cabinet. In other words, the appointments made by the Sovereign to offices which are still technically offices in his own household, are only made by him with reference to a number of considerations which have nothing to do with his household, but concern rather the goodwill and inclinations of other holders of offices.

How had this state of affairs come about? We have seen that the complete decline of the Great Council (for although Committees of the Council, especially those for foreign affairs and for Trade, existed into the eighteenth century, they were practically negligible, dealing only with such business as the King and Cabinet chose to lay before them) left the decision of matters of state to the King and such people as he chose to consult. But the King could only act through certain established formalities. The last two cases of attempts to override those formalities are those of the pardon of Danby, when Charles II. signed the pardon and then took the Great Seal out of Lord Chancellor Nottingham's hands to have the pardon sealed by an attendant; and that of the use of the Great Seal by Somers under William III. for the First Partition Treaty. Obviously, if these formalities had now become invulnerable, it was of importance that the officers charged with them should be willing to put them in operation; and thus these officers would become, whatever favourites in an unofficial capacity might be influencing the Sovereign, essential to consult.

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We may perhaps see the germ of modern Ministries in an incident of the reign of Charles I. When Sir John Coke was growing old and the question of his successor in the secretaryship became important, the Queen, desiring "a new combination," put forward Sir Henry Vane, while Strafford urged the retention of Coke.[1] This implies that the King was beginning to find that in order to pursue a certain line of conduct it was better for him to have his officers of State acting in concert—in a "combination." The nature of the Revolution of 1688 was of a kind to stereotype this tendency. Strong and independent in many ways as William III. was, it was clearly essential to him to hold together his influential supporters.

Ministerial Solidarity

This principle of action through formalities reached its final expression in theory as early as 1711, when in a debate on the conduct of the war in Spain, Lord Rochester said that "for several years past they had been told the Queen was to answer for everything; but he hoped that time was over; that according to the fundamental constitution of this kingdom Ministers are responsible for all."[2] How was it, then, that with a theory upon which to-day the whole power of Parliamentary Government rests, the Commons in the eighteenth century were so far from power? The truth is that Rochester's remarks were probably less

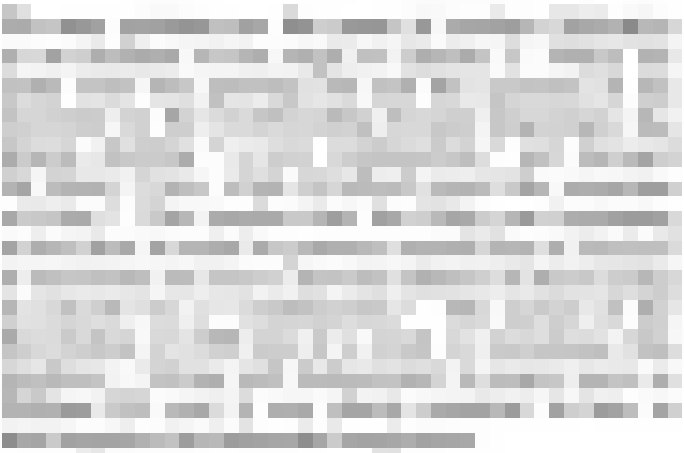
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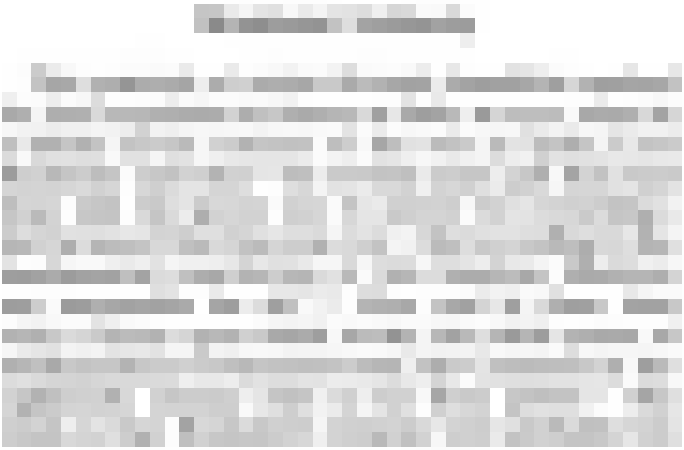
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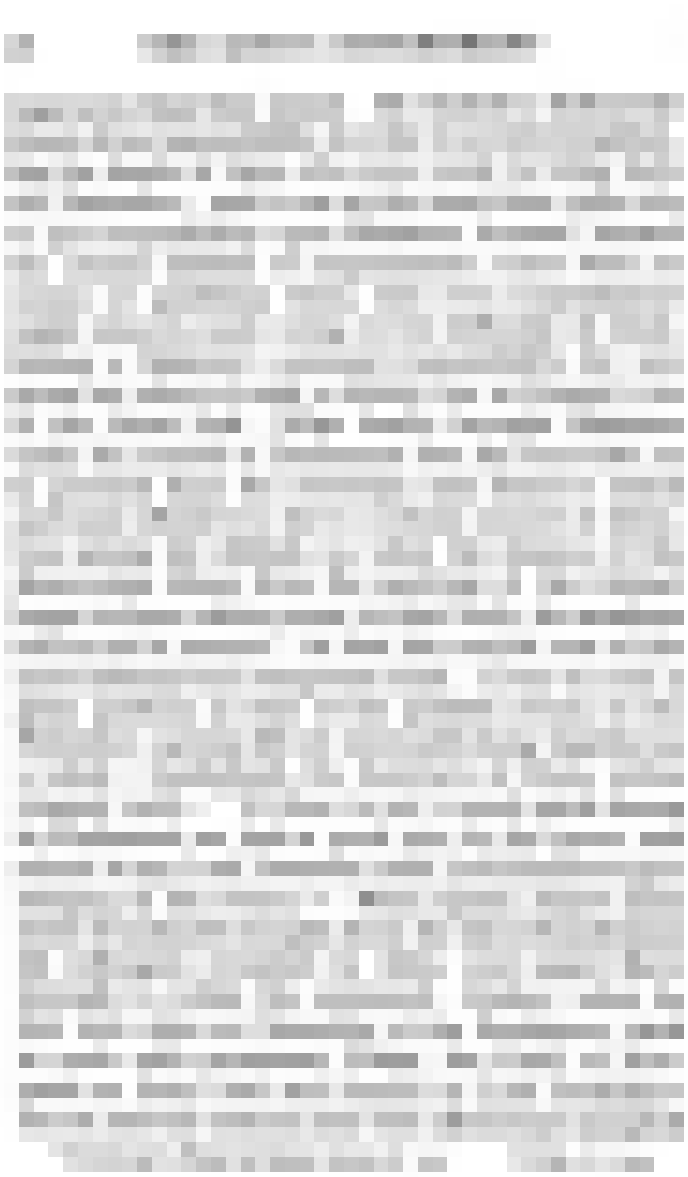


ingenuous than they sound. He wished to defend the Queen from responsibility, in order to avoid strengthening the hands of those who were ready to bring back the Pretender; and it was at the same time quite safe to put responsibility upon Ministers, because, beyond the clumsy method of impeachment, there were no means of punishing them, and even impeachment might miss its mark owing to the difficulty of establishing a Minister's personal responsibility for any given act, short of such a definite one as Somers's use of the Great Seal. What finally brought Ministers under the control of Parliament was the fact that, as in previous days the Sovereign had found it useful and more effective to have a certain concert of intention among his officials, so, when the absence of the Hanoverian Kings from the meetings of the Cabinet began to leave entire power to that body, its members had to act in concert. At first the concert was of the most informal and temporary kind. Even on such a great question as that of the possible return of the Pretender, a group did not necessarily hang together as a whole: Sunderland, the Secretary of State, writes (August 1708): "If there is not a good spirit shown in Parliament we had as good give up the game, and submit to my Lord Treasurer's and Lord Marlborough's bringing in the Prince."[1] When Queen Anne's inner circle of intimates brought about the fall of Sunderland, his colleagues remained in office, and urged Marlborough to retain the command. Harley, when he first took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, tried to work with prominent Whigs, the Duke of Newcastle as Privy Seal and Somers as Lord President.[2] Far on into the century men were offered and accepted

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Yet, once groups had become accustomed to acting together, the next stage could not be long in coming. As early as 1711, in connection with the debate already referred to, Swift writes of the possibility of "the whole Ministry" giving up their places. Yet the earliest date at which this can be said to have happened was 1765, when, on the formation of the first Rockingham Ministry, there were new Lords of the Treasury, a new Chancellor of the Exchequer, and two new Secretaries of State. "I do not remember in my times," writes Lord Chesterfield, "to have seen so much at once as an entire new Board of Treasury and two new Secretaries of State, *cum multis aliis*." [2] The case of the second Rockingham Ministry was even more complete.[3]

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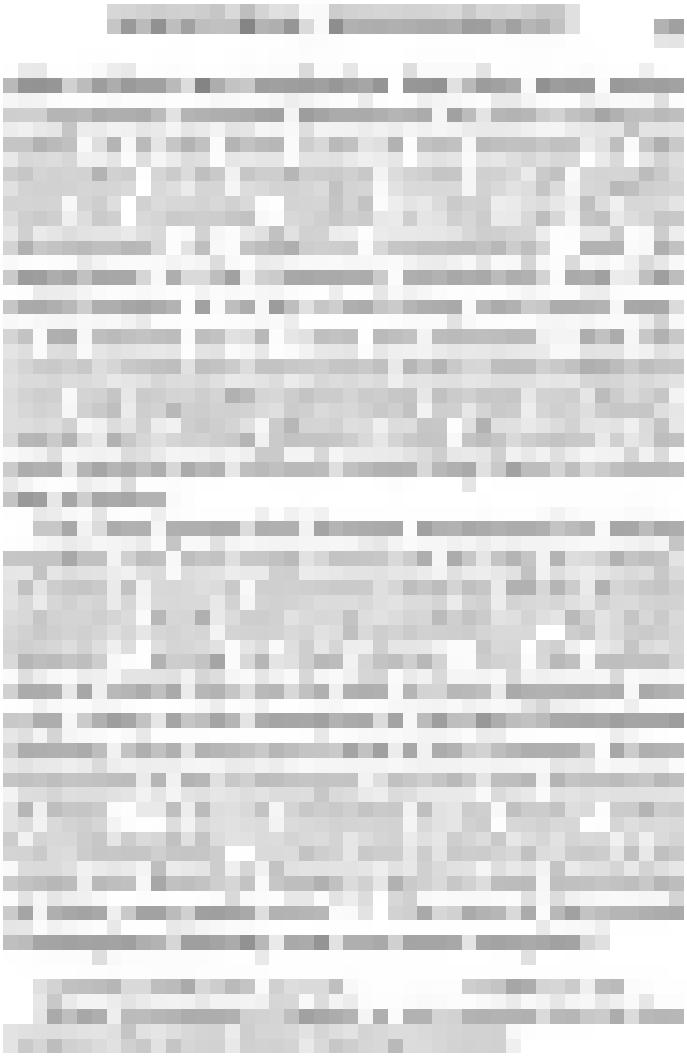
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Department Staffs still the King's Service

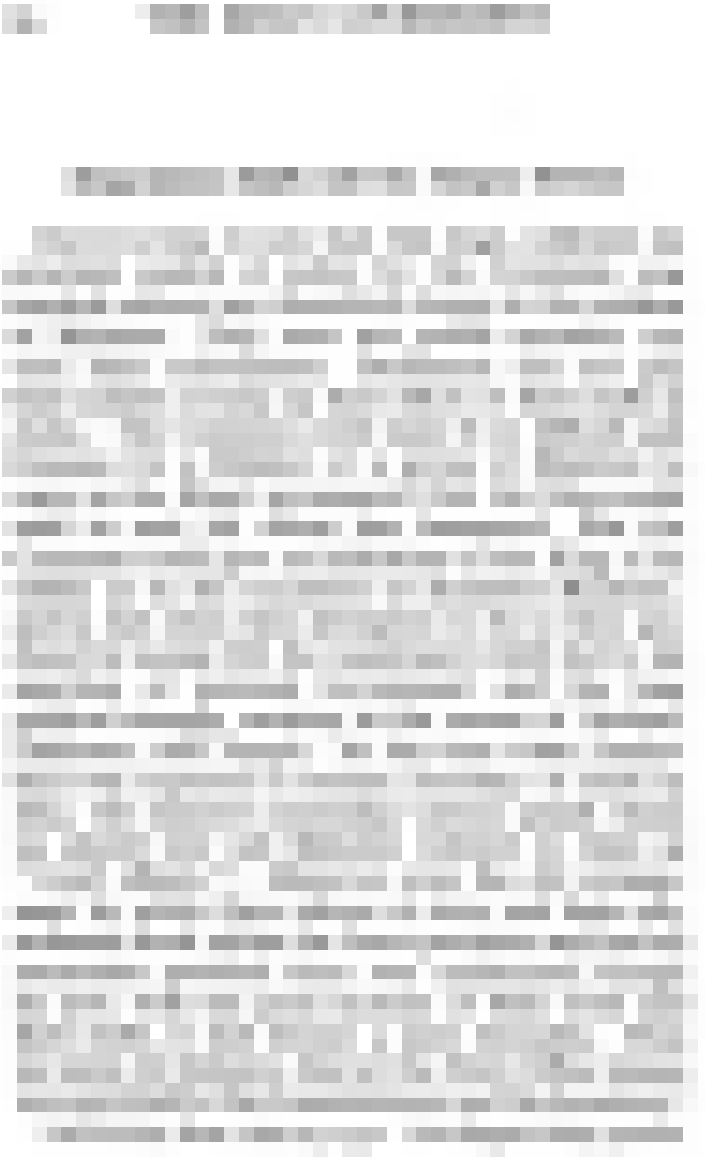
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Offices in Palace Precincts

This way of regarding the departments of government as the King's affair, Parliament merely providing him with a lump sum for carrying them on, makes it very difficult to arrive at any material picture of

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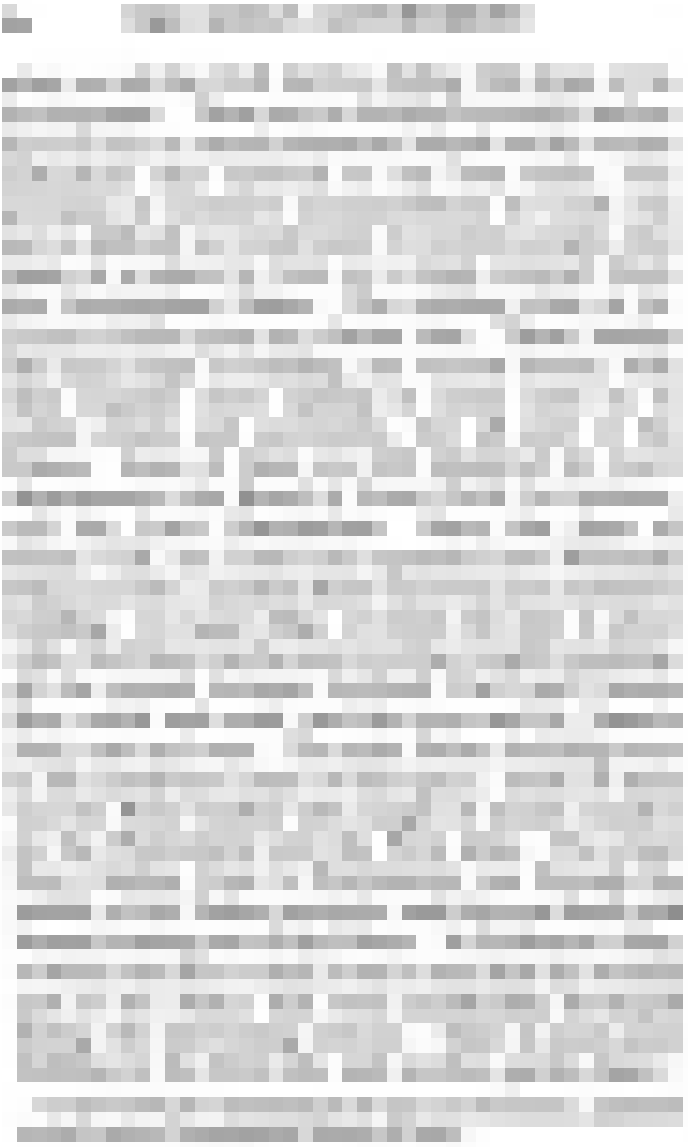


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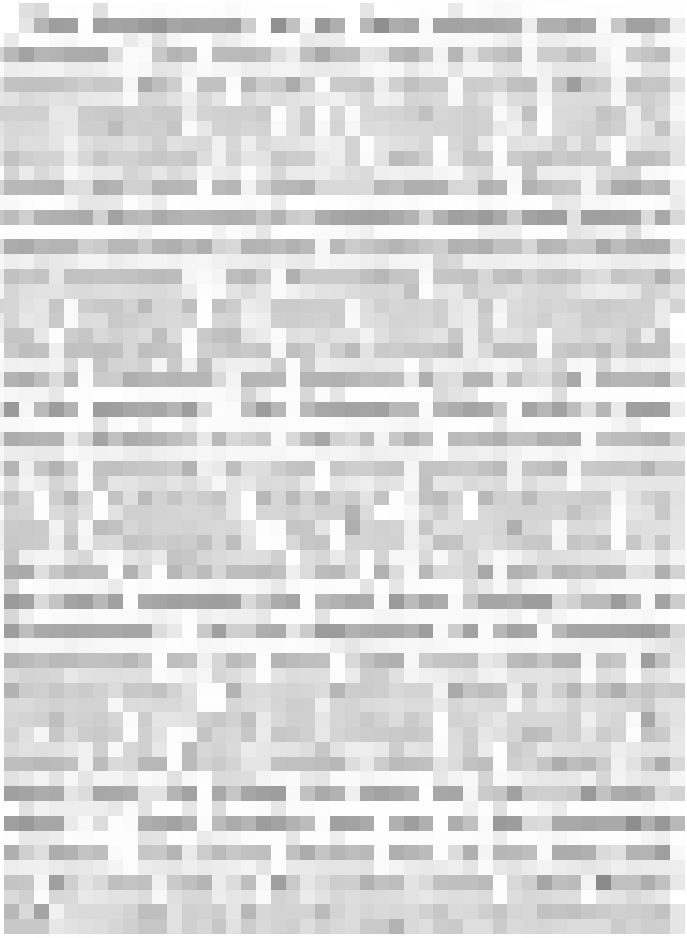
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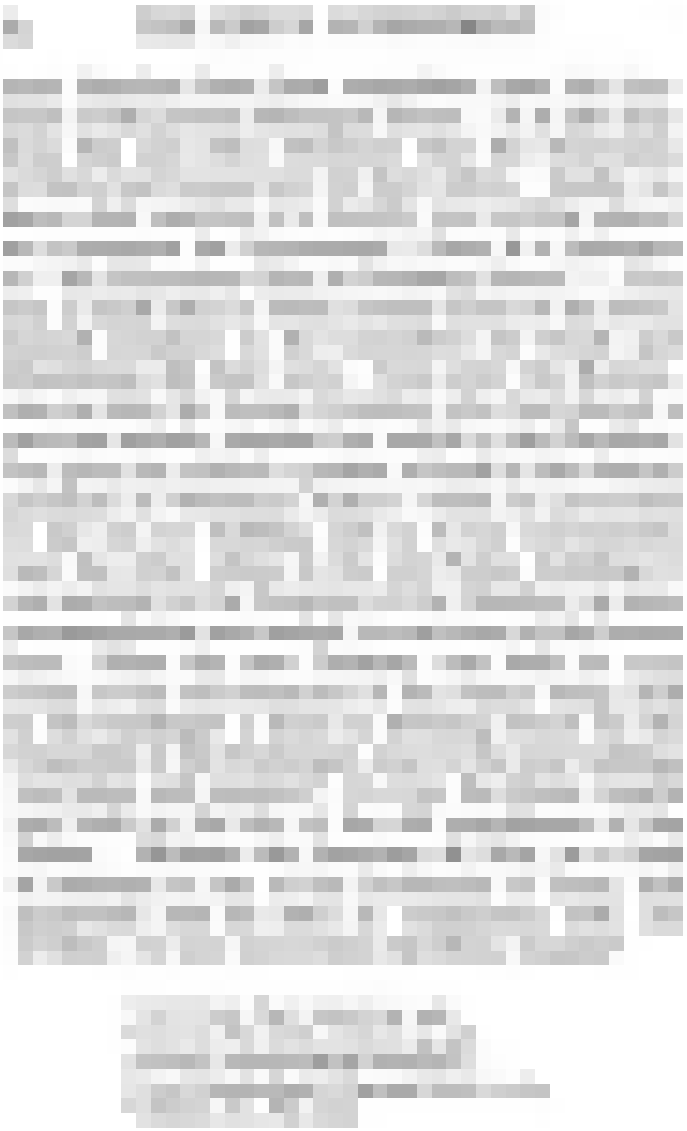
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The Size of the Office Staffs

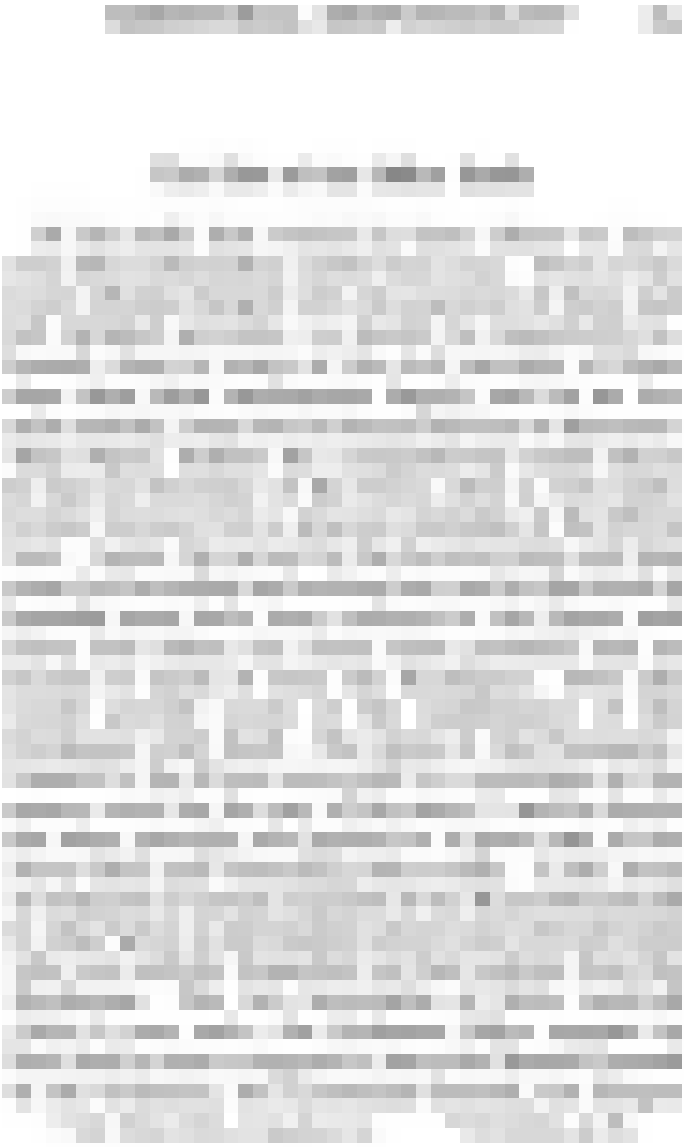
Of the staffs that worked in these offices we have very little information earlier than 1797. Even if the Court officials charged with the payment of them had left detailed accounts, we should be imperfectly informed, since so many of the civil servants of those days drew their emoluments largely, and in no few cases entirely, from fees for formal services or sinecures. Thus Pepys, besides the comparatively small salary he had as Secretary of the Navy, drew a very satisfactory income from a sinecure clerkship of the Privy Seal. Again, the patent for the Secretaryship cost him some £40 in sealing and writing fees, and as that kind of business must have been constant in the Signet and Privy Seal offices, the clerks there probably had no income to speak of from the Exchequer. Fees also would provide much of the maintenance of the Exchequer staff itself. The clerks of the Paymaster-General to the Forces were paid by a poundage on the money voted for the pay of the army ; [1] and no doubt the same principle was applied to a great part of the Navy Office and Victualling Office staffs. A MS. book of estimates of certain expenses of the Royal Household in 1699 [2] gives us information about some civil servants who were entirely dependent on their salaries from the Exchequer. The two Secretaries of State received £1850 a year each ; the Ordnance Office appears to have had no fees to support it, since the Master-General of the Ordnance, the Lieutenant-General, the Keeper

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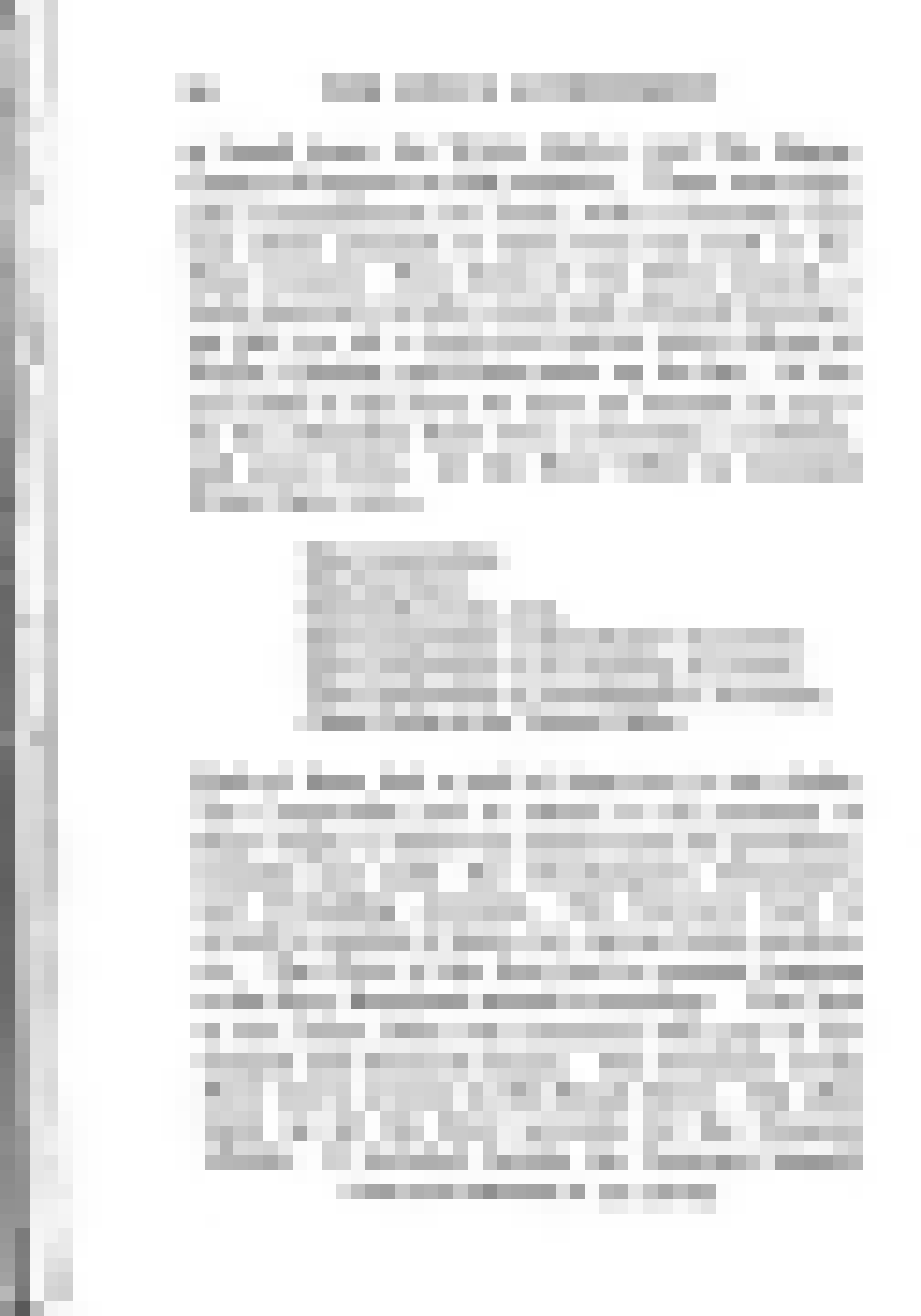


of Small Arms, the Works Master, and The Master Gunner all appear on this estimate. There were eight paid Commissioners for Trade, with a Secretary and four clerks attached to them from the staff of the Privy Council. Four clerks of the Privy Council, a Latin Secretary (at £80 a year) and a French Secretary (at £66, 13s. 4d. a year), and various minor officers of Works, Gardens, and Parks make up the list. Of the civil staff of the Navy we have an account in 1747.[1] At the Admiralty there were a Secretary, a solicitor, and seven clerks. At the Navy Office in Crutched Friars there were—

The Comptroller.
The Surveyor.
The Clerk of the Acts.
The Comptroller of Treasurer's Accounts.
The Comptroller of Victualling Accounts.
The Comptroller of Storekeeper's Accounts.
Chief Clerk of the Ticket Office.

Each of these had a staff of from two to six clerks. The Comptroller had to attend to all payment of ships' wages, to follow the market rates for provisions, examine and audit the Storekeeper's, Treasurer's, and Victualling Accounts. The Surveyor had to attend to supplies of hemp, tar, canvas, boats, anchors, etc. The Clerk of the Acts had to present business to the Navy Board and attend its meetings. The Clerk of the Ticket Office was concerned with pay of discharged and deceased seamen. The Treasurer of the Navy was in a house in Old Broad Street. His office made up all the Navy accounts for the Treasury officials. It included, besides the Treasurer himself,

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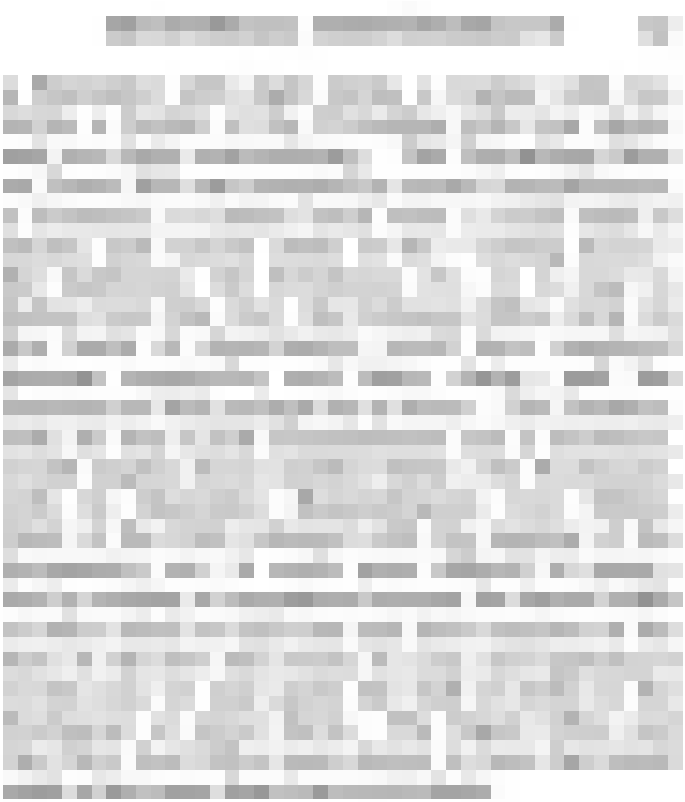
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The Third Secretaryship of State

The practice of government by departments had thus reached, by the middle of the eighteenth century, a shape quite recognisable by modern eyes. As far as the departments were concerned there is little left to record of this period except a steady enlargement.





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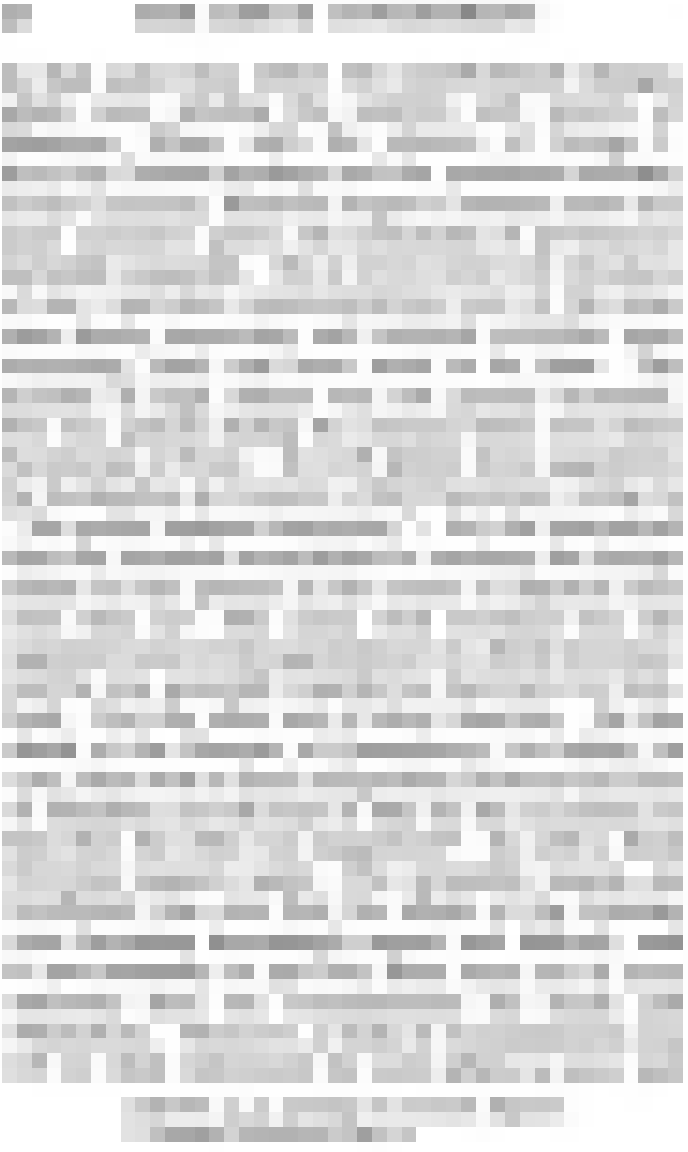
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In that point they reflect the constitutional changes which were altering the position and powers of Ministers. When, with the absence of George I. from the Cabinet meetings and the persistent criticism of the Commons, Ministers began to assume more and more executive power, the mechanism of government naturally expanded. Six or seven men took the place of one; and since communications were at the same time slowly improving, and national activities were increasing, there was more work to be done. The number of high officers was not greatly increased. For two periods during the century there were three Secretaries of State. In 1708 Queen Anne appointed, by declaration in Council, a third Secretary, owing to "the public business increasing"; but she announced that she intended nevertheless to continue the foreign affairs for the present in the course of dispatch they were then in.[1] The union with Scotland was the apparent cause of the appointment of a third Secretary, and he was generally regarded as Secretary for Scotland. But the office was of short duration. On the death of the Marquis of Queensberry, its holder, in 1711, there was so much competition between the Duke of Hamilton and the Earl of Mar for the succession to him that the office was suppressed.[2] In 1768 a third Secretary appears again. The ostensible reason—no insufficient one—was that the affairs of the Colonies were becoming increasingly urgent and difficult, and it was necessary to put over them some one of more authority than the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Moreover, a body of Commissioners was not an ideal instrument for such affairs as were just

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The Commons and the Public Service

Burke's reforms mark a distinct stage in the development of our subject, because they began that process of clearing up the details of expenditure upon purposes of government which ended fifty years later with the inauguration of the present system of Civil Service estimates and supply. The old method of voting lump sums of money to the Crown was breaking down completely. The Crown was perpetually finding the supply insufficient; and Parliament was perpetually being irritated by demands for more coming upon it, as it were, out of the dark. It is possible that the departments of government might have remained much longer in their old system if corruption had not been so rampant. Every one was on the look-out for pieces of patronage, from the private Member of Parliament, whose support might be secured by providing him with a few Customs and Excise jobs, or a few local postmasterships, to give away among constituents, to the highest officers of State themselves.

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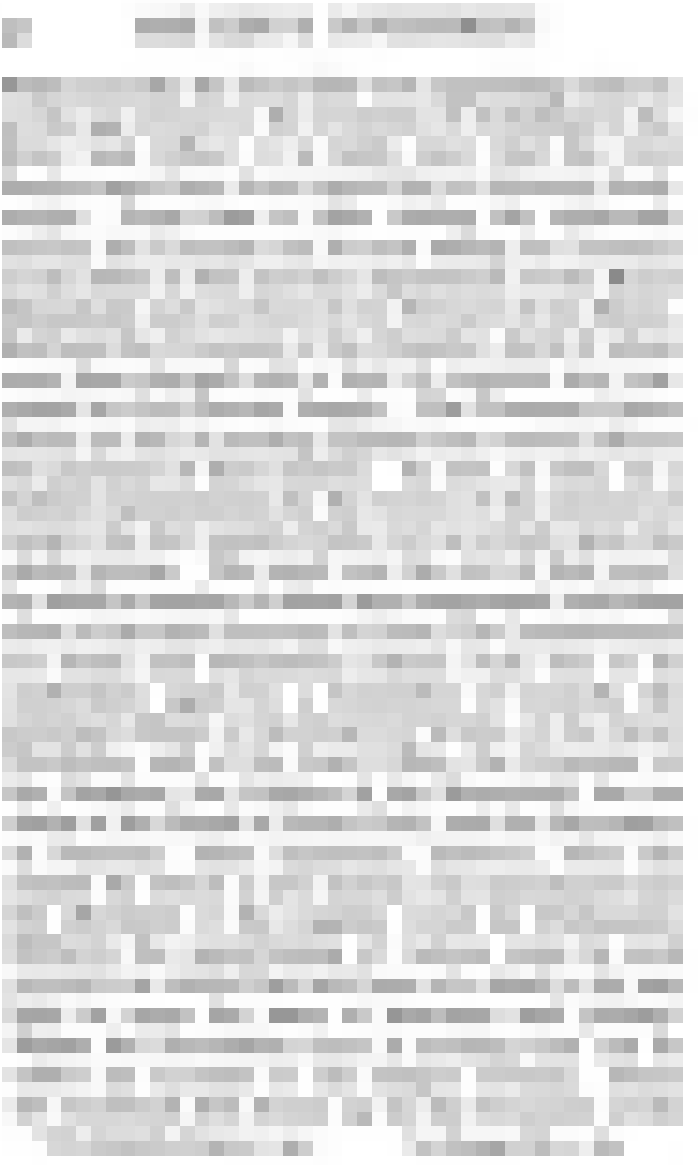
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When men like the Grenvilles were appointing relatives at the age of four to the reversion of clerkships in the Privy Seal Office,[1] it is fairly clear that the Civil Service must have been supporting an immense dead-weight. From time to time during the eighteenth century the Treasury can be seen asking for accounts of the debts of this and that department of the Royal Household, such as those of the Steward of the Household and the Treasurer of the Chamber, both of whom were then charged with a host of expenses now contained in Civil Service Supply. The Treasury Letter Books are full of pressing appeals from various officers for payment of their salaries. At last, in 1782, on a further representation by the Crown of the amount of money due but unpaid, Burke led an attack upon the whole system. The result was the Act of that year,[2] by which a number of offices were suppressed, including those of the third Secretary of State, the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations (whose work was to be undertaken again by a Committee of Council), the principal officers of the Board of Works, of the Great Wardrobe, and of the Jewel Office, the Treasurer of the Chamber, the Cofferer of the Household, the six clerks of the Board of Green Cloth, and the Paymaster of Pensions. More important, however, were the clauses by which a new system was introduced into the allotment of the supplies voted by Parliament. Hitherto the apportioning of various sums in such accounts as existed had not been of a kind to let any light in upon the mass of sinecures and jobbery. Before the Revolution there is nothing that can be called an account of the King's revenue. There are occasional lists drawn up by the Treasurer of the

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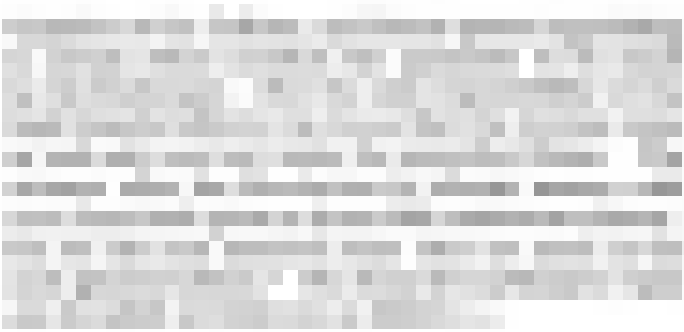


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Army Services.
Navy Services.
Ordnance Services.
Privy Purse.
Cofferer of the Household.
Works and Gardens.
Pensions.
Secret Service.
Fees and Salaries.
British Ministers Abroad and Contingent Charges.

A useful proof of the vagueness surrounding the whole system is the fact that, when the judicial establishment begins to make a separate appearance in the reign of George II., the amount of Fees and Salaries shows no diminution.

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The Attempt to enforce Economy

The Burke reforms introduced a new classification as follows :—

Privy Purse (including allowances to the Royal Family).
The Judicial Establishment.
Ministers Abroad.
Bills of the Royal Tradesmen.
Wages of the King's Menial Servants.
Pensions and Annuities.
Fees and Salaries.
Salaries of the Treasury and Exchequer.

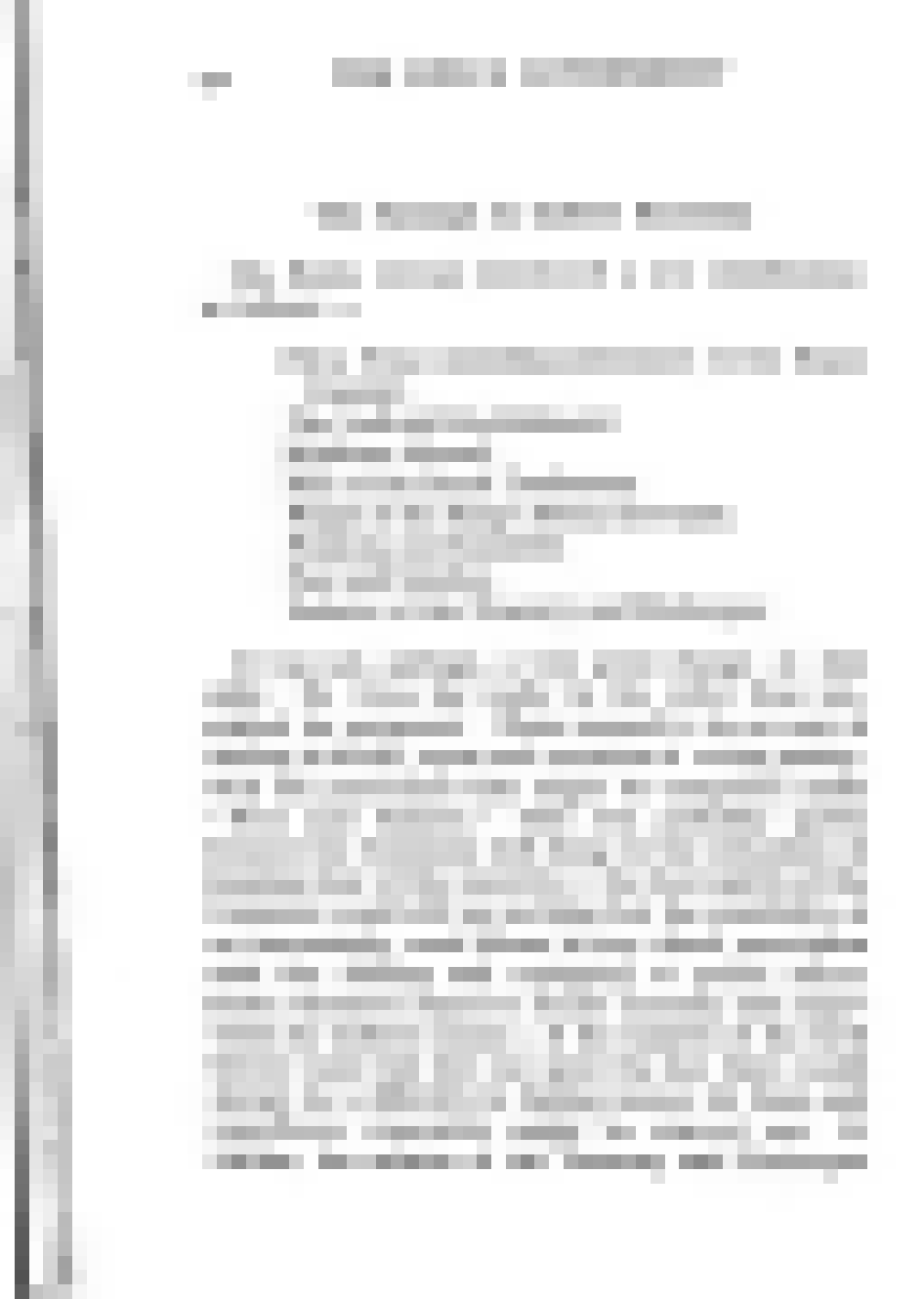
It was not, perhaps, a very great change at first sight. Its force lay really in the order thus prescribed for payments. There seemed to be no way of dealing in detail, upon each occasion of voting money, with the particulars that might be comprised under "Fees and Salaries." This was probably partly because the Commons still clung to the old policy of keeping clear of the executive ; the best spirits of the Commons could still see nothing but the possibility of an increasingly venal House in any direct association with the staffing and equipping of public offices. Burke therefore hoped to secure economy and supervision by indirect means ; if the salaries of the Civil Service came last but one upon the list, there would always be a difficulty in finding money for them and superfluous sinecurists might be starved out. If, further, the salaries of the Treasury and Exchequer

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It was not, perhaps, a very great change at first sight. Its force lay really in the order thus prescribed for payments. There seemed to be no way of dealing in detail, upon each occasion of voting money, with the particulars that might be comprised under "Fees and Salaries." This was probably partly because the Commons still clung to the old policy of keeping clear of the executive ; the best spirits of the Commons could still see nothing but the possibility of an increasingly venal House in any direct association with the staffing and equipping of public offices. Burke therefore hoped to secure economy and supervision by indirect means ; if the salaries of the Civil Service came last but one upon the list, there would always be a difficulty in finding money for them and superfluous sinecurists might be starved out. If, further, the salaries of the Treasury and Exchequer

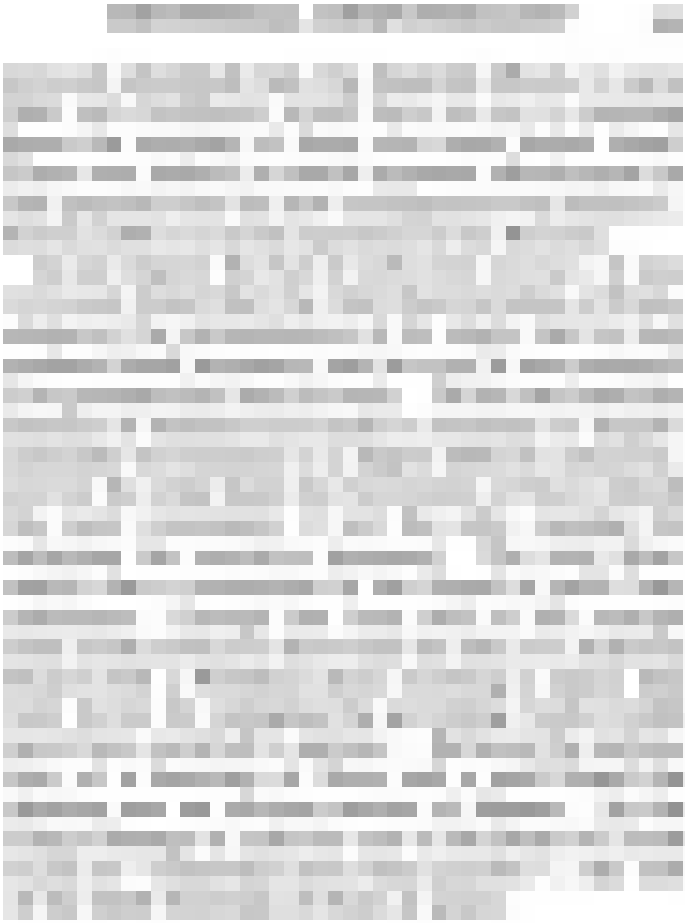


were put absolutely last, the financial officers, to save their own livelihood, would have an eye to pruning down the numbers of those who came before them. There was, indeed, so much apparent effectiveness in this proposal that the new arrangement was delayed; but by 1786 it is in full operation in the Returns.

In one respect the Act of 1782 went too far; it was very soon found that the third Secretaryship of State, whatever the circumstances of its origin, had in fact rendered itself necessary, and in 1794 it was restored. Two processes had been at work. On the one hand the increase of business had made it necessary to departmentalise Government to a degree hitherto unknown; and on the other hand the Secretaries of State offered the most convenient, if not the only, opening for enlarging the executive *personnel*. The only alternative was a restoration of the Board of paid Commissioners. Enough has been said of the corrupt state of the service to show that the idea of a fictitious Board with a President alone receiving a salary (the later device for enlarging the governing body) would never have occurred to anyone. Between the restoration of a Secretary of State and a paid Board the decision was an obvious matter of finance. In the King's Message of 1782 the cost of the Board of Trade is put at "somewhat more than £12,600"; the cost of the third Secretary of State at £7500.

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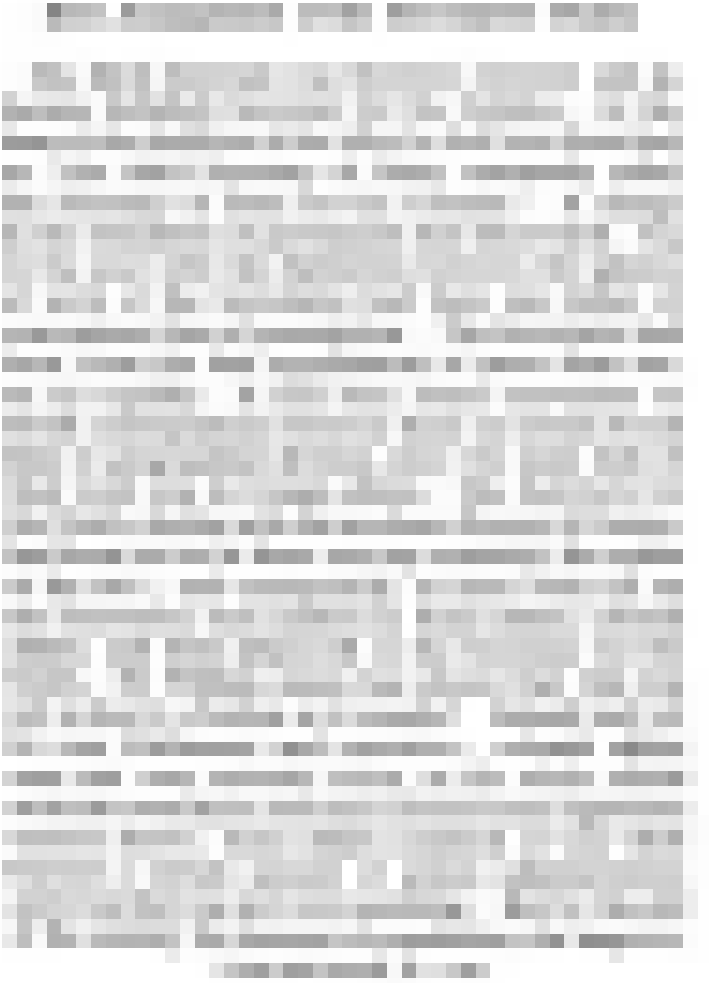
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New Arrangement of the Secretaries' Duties

The third Secretary was therefore restored, and he became definitely Secretary for the Colonies. At the time of the abolition of the office he had been described as "the third Secretary of State, commonly called the Secretary of State for the Colonies." A change in the formalities of government had intervened. Up to the year 1782 the distinction between the spheres of work of the Secretaries had been one rather of convenience than of prescription. The Secretaries had been, from the first appointment of more than one, on an equality. It had been found convenient to divide correspondence between them on certain broad lines of geographical division, since the main bulk of their work was in foreign affairs. The Secretary for the North, dealing with the northern Powers of Europe, had been (so far as there was any seniority) the senior of the two; and consequently, as more work fell on the Secretaries, such matters as home affairs, colonial affairs, and Irish affairs fell to the Secretary for the South. Sir William Anson has shown that this was not as heavy a burden as it sounds.[1] Ireland had yet its own Parliament and executive; colonial affairs were not very seriously taken, as the whole official attitude towards the American colonies in the eighteenth century shows; home affairs consisted of very little beyond a certain amount of prison administration, and even that was not very searching. But by the end of the century the increase of population, the improve-

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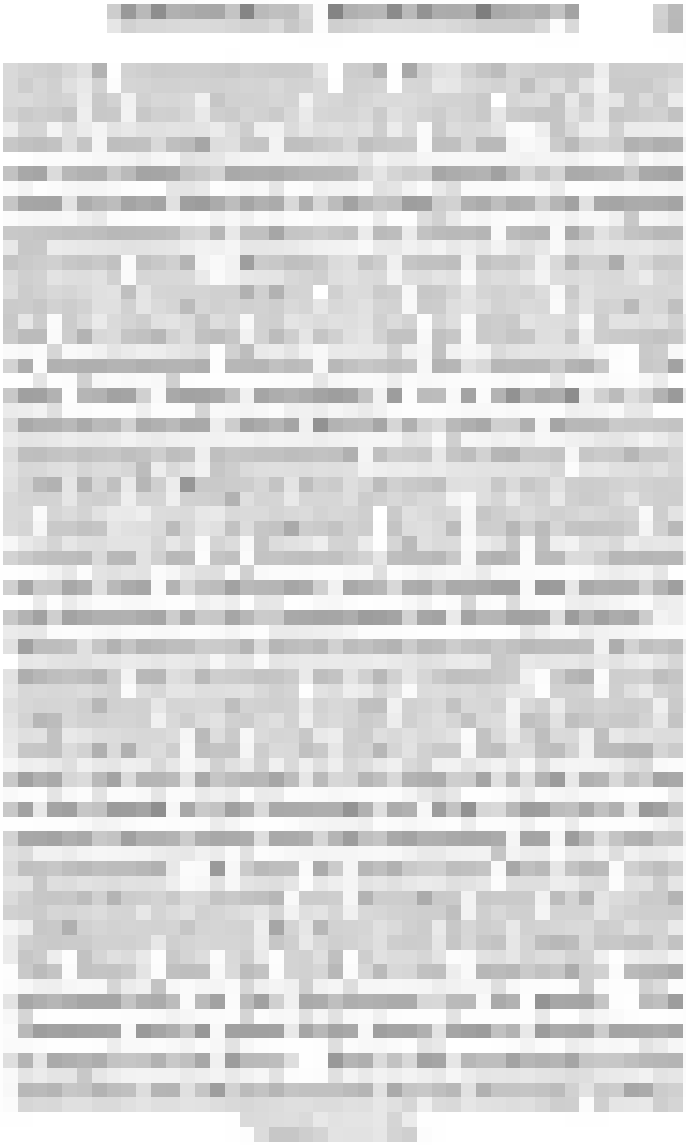
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ment of communications, and the consequent opportunity for more distinct central control, made it advisable to rearrange the Secretaries' duties. The change was very simply inaugurated; it appears to have been done by mere direction of the King, just as the original apportionment of duties for the North and the South had been made. Nothing can show more clearly the absence of responsibility, in the last resort, to anyone but the King than the fact that no Order in Council or departmental Minute records the alteration. The only State Paper recording it is a circular to the Ministers abroad, dated March 29, 1782, in which Fox, announcing his appointment to be Secretary of State, adds that the King has been pleased "at the same time to make a new arrangement in the Departments by conferring that for Domestic Affairs and the Colonies on the Earl of Shelburne, and entrusting me with the sole direction of the Department for Foreign Affairs." [1] When, therefore, the third Secretary reappeared, he was definitely the Secretary for the Colonies; and as the supposition was that he would not have an amount of work equal to that of the other two, the War Department was also attached to his office in so far as it lay in the hands of the Secretary at War—that is to say, general Army policy and the estimating for the year's requirements. It may be noted here that the comparatively late growth of a standing army had caused a difference between the Navy and Army departments. The Navy, like the Civil Service, practically came automatically on the Exchequer for its needs. The Treasury was in effect little more than a book-keeper in respect to the Navy. But it did occasionally revise and reduce the estimates made by the Secretary at War.

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Development of the Post Office

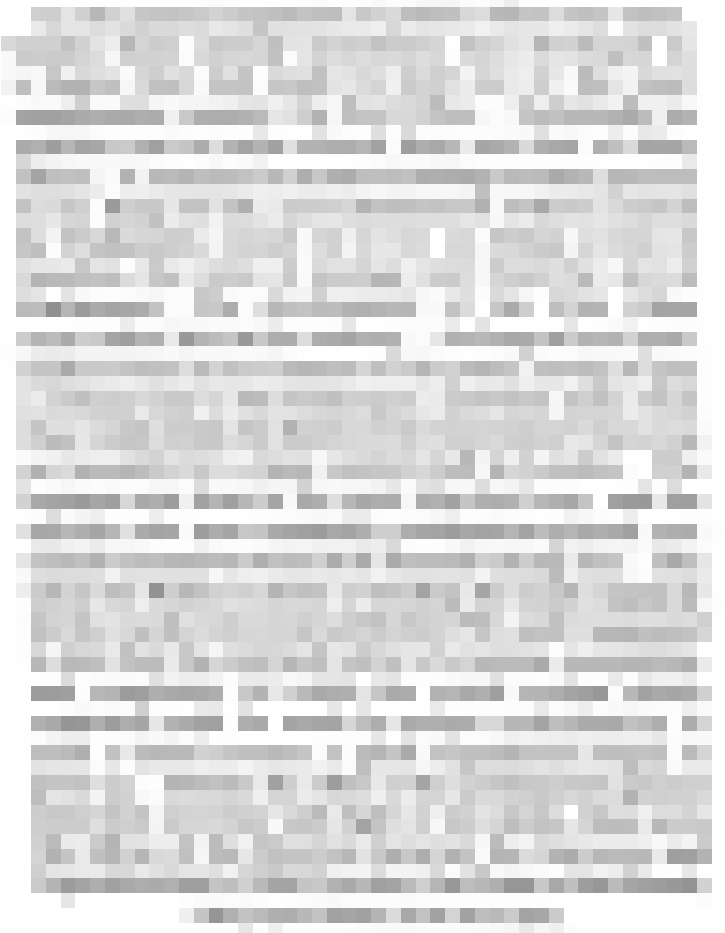
In the general expansion of public offices one other, besides those already mentioned, had developed to a degree that had made its staff one of the most considerable, namely, the Post Office. Technically its position was no more altered than was that of other offices ; it remained a means of raising revenue granted to the King for life, and administered without control by Parliament, except in so far as, being a form of taxation, the rates of postage were fixed by Act of Parliament. The development of the Post Office came rather late in the century. As long as local postmasters were in fact farmers of the posts, having to pay a certain sum to the Exchequer, and then make what they could within the limits of the fixed rates,[1] there was no necessity for a large central staff in London. The business was done in the most slip-shod way, and the officials who were nominally postmasters-general concerned themselves with little beyond taking fees. But when the Palmer scheme of sending the mails regularly by the coach-routes was laid before Pitt, and it appeared to him that the confused welter of evasions, perquisites, and complaints (of which the postal system chiefly consisted) could be made by proper centralisation to yield a useful revenue, a great organisation began to grow up. Besides the office of the postmasters-general with their secretary and eight or ten clerks, there were the offices of the Receiver-General, the Surveyor and Superintendent of Mail Coaches, the Clerks of the Roads,

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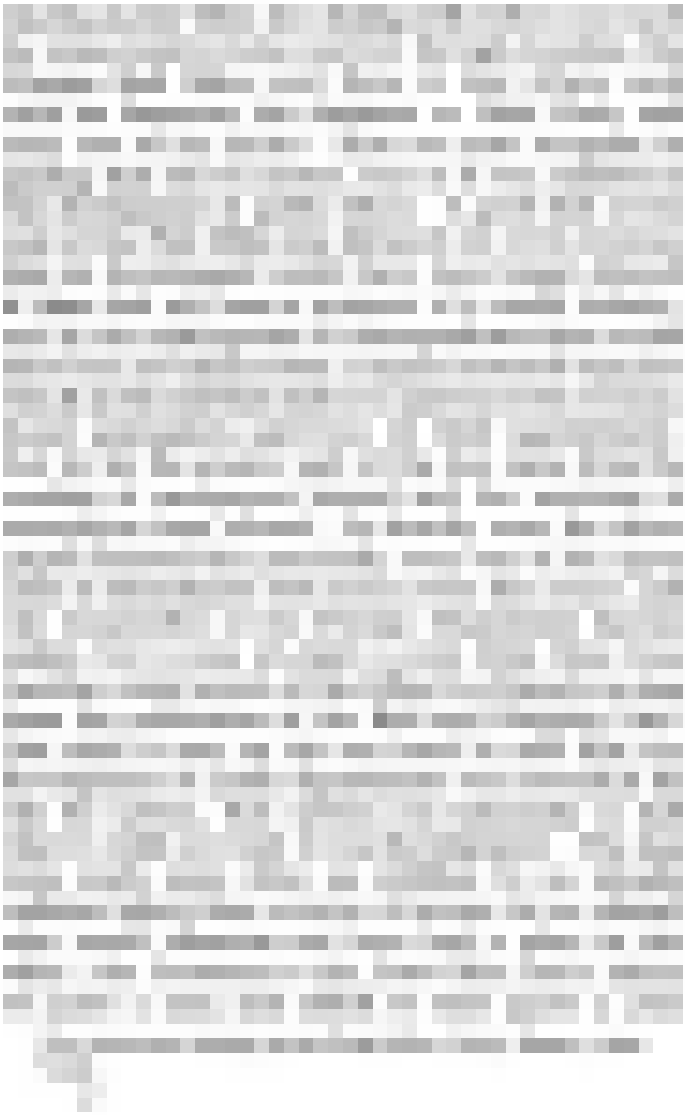
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the Bye-Letter Office (for dealing with letters conveyed by cross-country routes and not through London), the Foreign Mail Office, and three or four others, each with an Inspector, his Assistant or Chief Clerk, and from two to six clerks.[1] Here we must recognise in passing that the fee system, bad as it was, assisted in the development of public offices. A good deal of the cost of the Post Office was defrayed out of its revenue. But its development would have been longer delayed if there had not been a prospect of a useful balance; and in the existing state of correspondence there would have been no balance from a largely increased organisation if all the staff had had to be paid out of the revenue. Local postmasters paid fees on their appointment; but by far the greater part of the fees came from the sending of newspapers abroad and the receiving of newspapers from abroad. So heavily were the newspapers mulcted that practically every one of the upper class of subordinates took money from this source, and the Comptroller of the Foreign Department had no salary, but a sum of £3270 a year from these fees. Another whole branch of the Office lived largely on fees from the publication of the Mail and Shipping List.[2] But while it may on the one hand be said that the development of public departments was forwarded by the fee system, that system was inherently so bad that it could not tend to real development. The fees were much more often an addition to an already sufficient salary than a source of income for an official, who would otherwise not have had a place in the office; the Secretary to the Post Office had a salary of £1200 a year, and added to that £3100 a year

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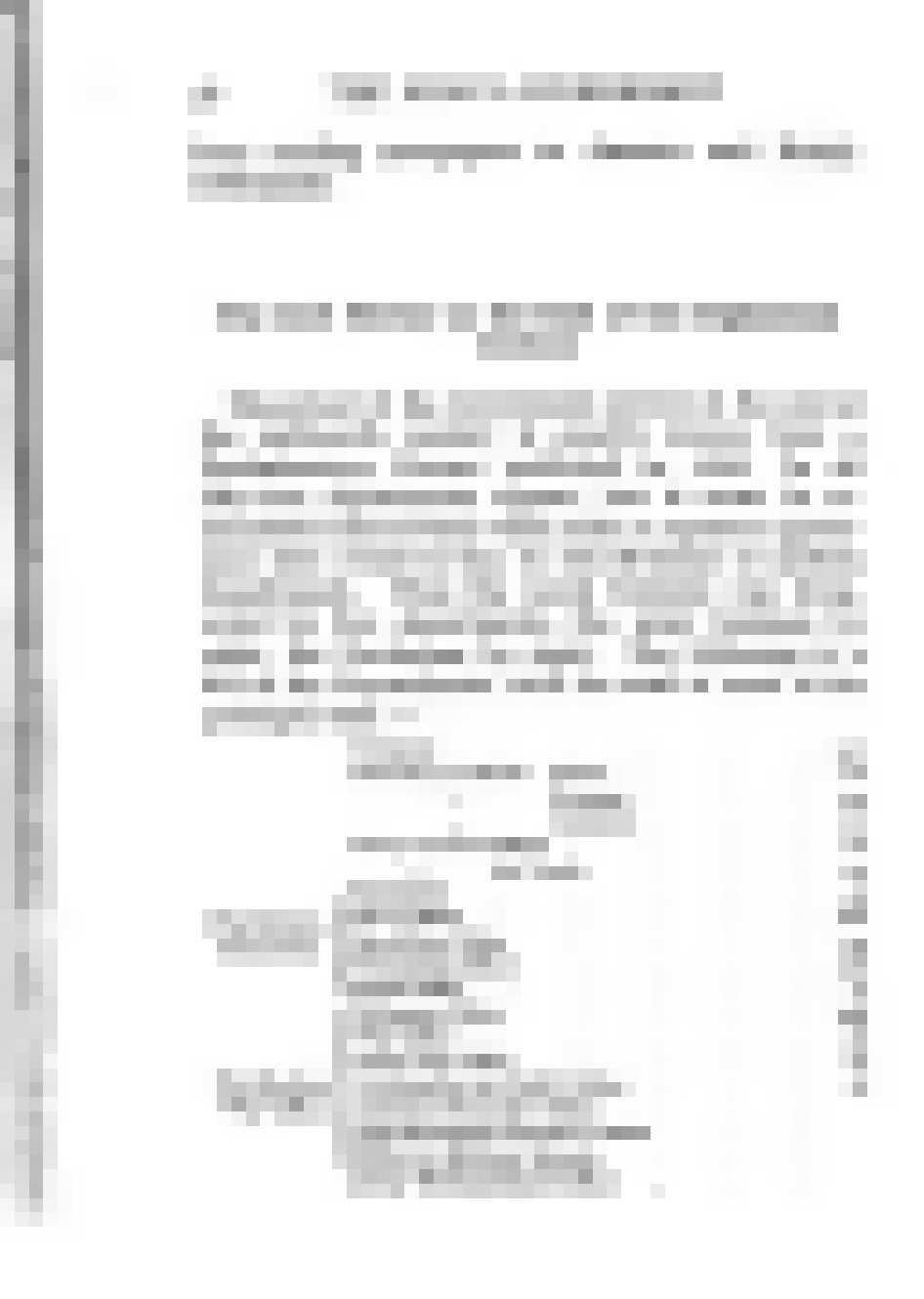
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from sending newspapers to America and British settlements.

The Civil Service at the End of the Eighteenth Century

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	Secretary of State : Home	26
	,, Foreign	24
	,, Colonies	12
	Privy Council Office	16
	,, for Trade	19
The Modern Admiralty	Admiralty	45
	Navy Office	160
	Navy Pay Office	73
	Victualling Office	118
	Audit Office	33
The Modern War Office	Ordnance Office	353
	War Office	58
	Army Pay Office	24
	Commander-in-Chief's Office	16
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Customs Office	6004
Excise Office	6580
Stamps Office	
Taxes Office	
Post Office: Great Britain . . .	
,, Ireland	
Mint Office	
Alien Office	
Stationery Office . . .	
State Paper Office . . .	
Comptroller of Army Accounts . .	
National Debt Office . . .	
Lottery Office	
Hackney Coach, Hawkers', and Pedlars' Office.	
Auditor of Exchequer	26
Teller of Exchequer	6
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Pells Office	23
Exchequer Bill Office	8

It is very difficult to make any comparison between these establishments and the establishments of to-day, so great have been the changes in the work and the character of the departments. If we take the Foreign Office, as one that has least altered its duties, we find that a staff of 24 in 1797 has grown to one of 129 in 1912. The old cumbrous machinery of the Exchequer, which can hardly be said to have done any real auditing in 1797 with a staff of 73 persons, has been replaced by the Exchequer and Audit Department with a staff in 1912 of 208. The truth probably is that, while there must have been less public work to be done, the staffs were inadequate to do what there was, and were bound to remain inadequate so long as the Commons, with whom rested the granting of supplies, could not but regard the public service as a preserve of sinecurists and placemen.

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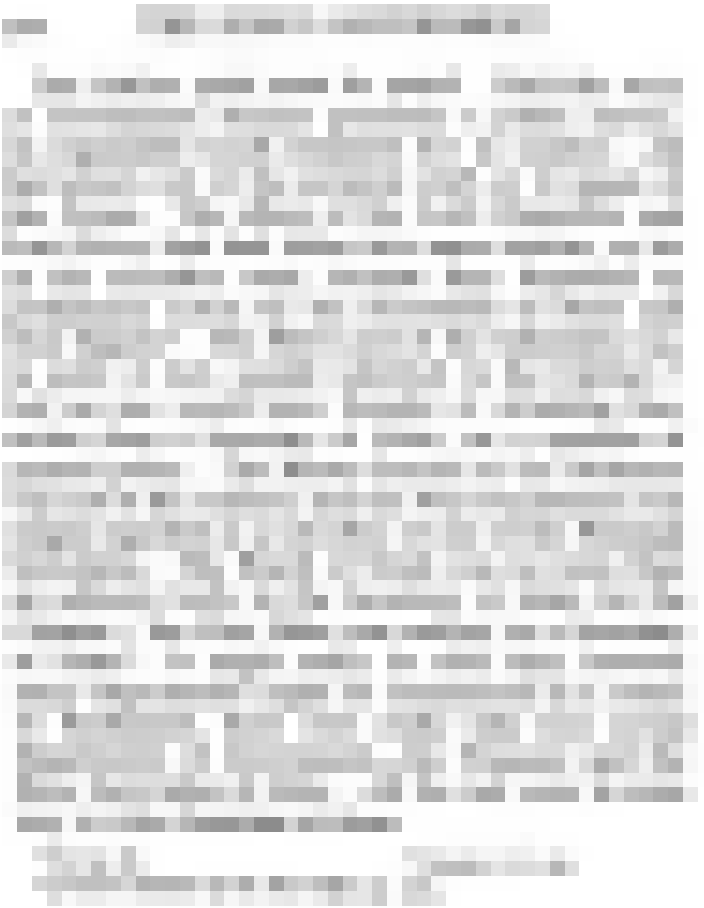


One further point must be noted. Until the work of Government became genuinely a public service, its responsible heads remained few in number. All had grown out of the personal staff, so to speak, of the Crown. The offices of the Lord Chancellor and Lord Privy Seal had fallen into mere routine, so far as the executive went, because they depended on preliminary action by the Secretaries of State and their Signets.[1] The First Lord of the Admiralty was, in point of fact, usually admitted to the Cabinet;[2] but no one would have thought of attacking him, rather than a Secretary of State, on a question of general policy. The Master-General of the Ordnance was not of the Cabinet, and the War Department was simply regarded as a sub-office of one of the Principal Secretaries. The Board of Trade was no more than an advisory body to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; the Post Office was subject to a Secretary of State.[3] It might really be said that, however many departments might be enumerated in a return to Parliament, there were really only four actual departments of Government—the Treasury and the three Secretaries of State. All the rest were in some way or other branches of these.

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CHAPTER IV

THE RISE OF THE MODERN SYSTEM

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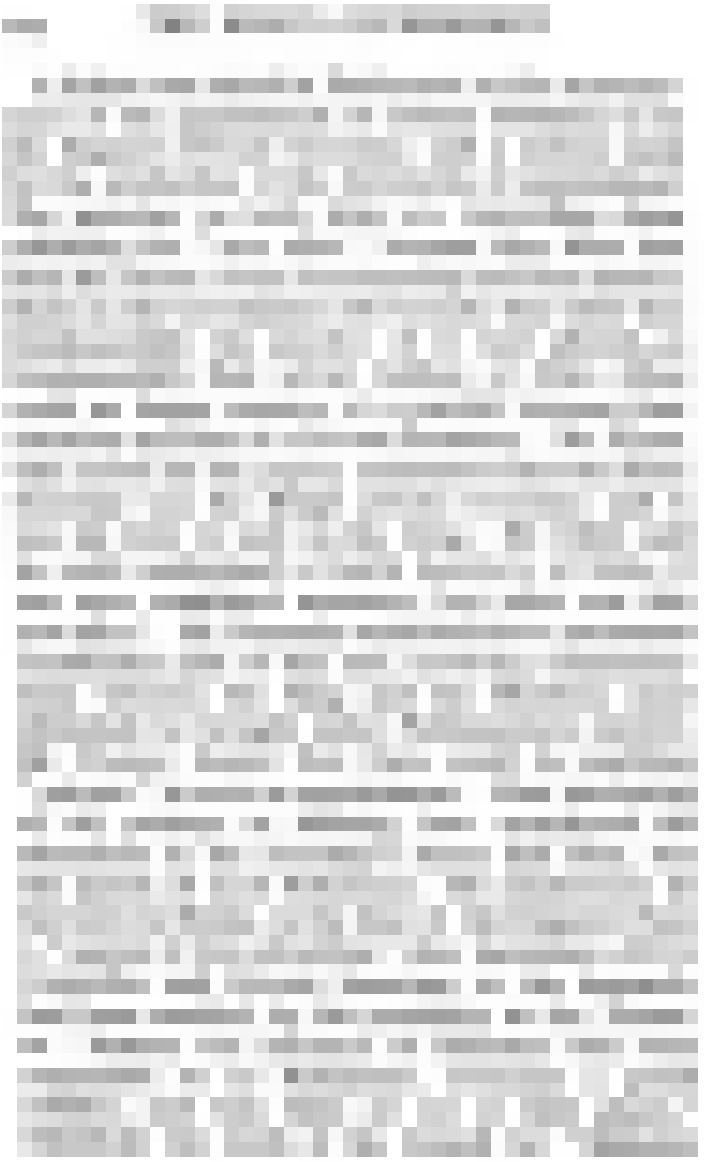
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A debate was raised in Parliament on the announcement of the appointment of Colonel M'Mahon to be the Regent's Private Secretary, and a motion made for the production of the documents of appointment. The speeches on both sides are interesting—those criticising the "new office" because they show how little the theory of the Secretaryship had been altered; those on the Government side because they show how fundamentally the practice of it had altered—so fundamentally that actual holders of State offices could no longer conceive of a parallel between their situation and that of a Private Secretary. Mr. Wynn, who moved for the papers, maintained that the Home Secretary was the King's private Secretary, and it was his duty to wait on the King. Mr. Elliot said he could understand a fourth Secretary of State, if one were considered necessary, but what was this new office? Mr. Ponsonby remarked that a permanent confidential post of this sort, involving communications between the King and his Ministers, must ultimately be brought under Parliamentary control; Mr. Tierney denied that there could be anything "private" in such an appointment. Most interesting of all, perhaps, as showing how unanalysed the alterations in the Secretary's status had been, was the speech of Lord Folkestone. He related how he had seen in Russia, in the time of the Emperor Paul, a "person of low extraction," who, becoming a Privy Councillor and Private Secretary to the monarch, had been enabled, by his proximity to the Throne, to "destroy the influence of Ministers who were responsible to no Parliament, overcome a proud nobility, and turn them all out of their places." Substitute the Lords of the Council for "Ministers

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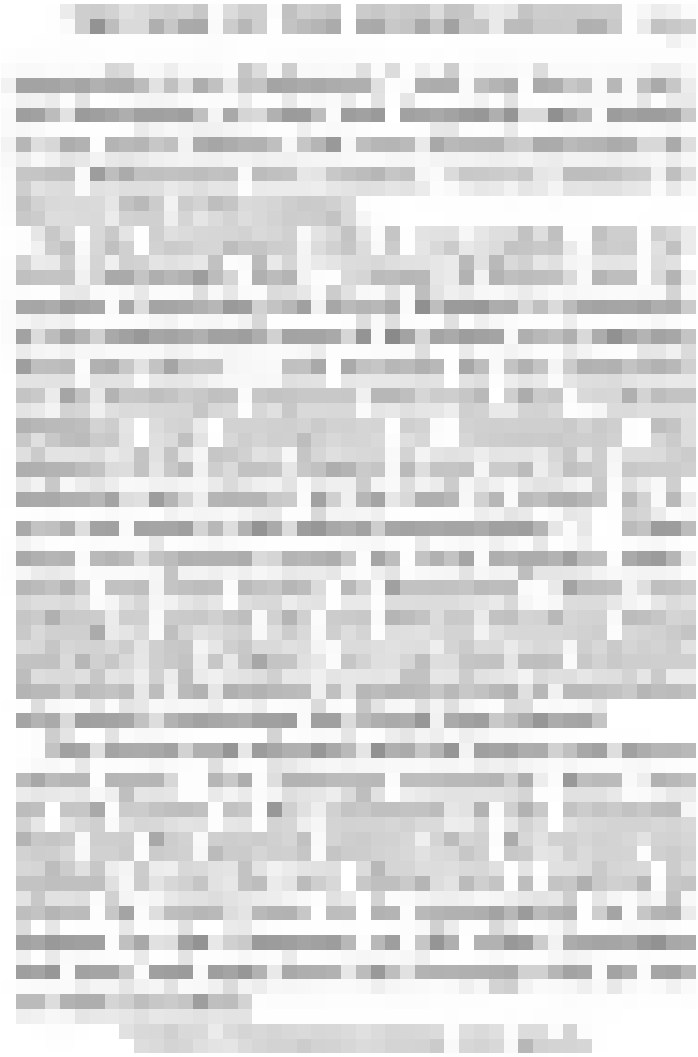


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Double Impulse towards Reform

Before long the status of the service of government was to be so deeply altered that the real possibilities of such a situation as this could hardly have emerged again. Reluctant as the Commons undoubtedly were to undertake responsibility for the public service, they had been embarked by the Burke reforms upon a course which obliged them to shoulder it in the end. The first step in this process may be discerned in the Return of Public Income and Expenditure for the year 1802.[1] In it, besides the various headings which had been customary since those reforms, appears a new one—"Miscellaneous Civil Services out of Supplies"—and under this head are grouped the following items :—

1. Public Works and Buildings.
2. Salaries, etc., of Public Departments.
3. Law and Justice.
4. Education, Science, and Art.
5. Colonial, Consular, and Foreign Services.

The change suggested by the second of these items was not so great as it may seem to be at first sight. It did not mean that the salaries of the staff of public departments were at the disposal of the House of Commons in any new way. It merely meant that instead of charging the Consolidated Fund with increased sums for the Civil Service, the supplementary demands for each year were to be placed on Supply—were, in other words, to be strictly in accordance with

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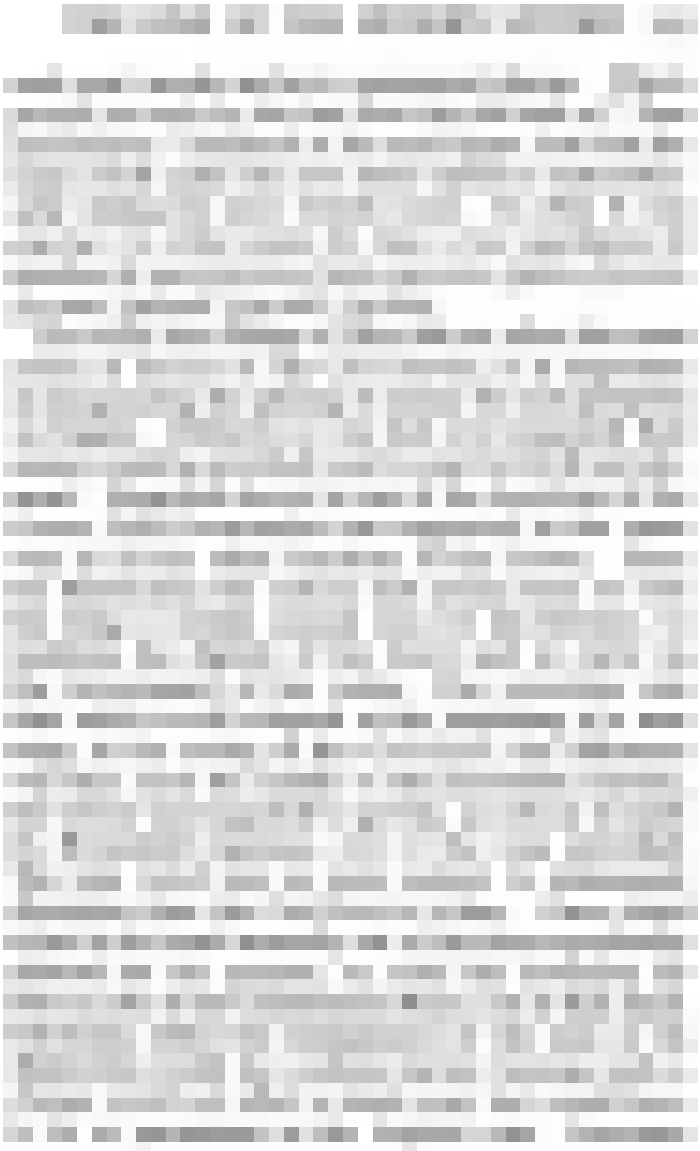
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But while this change of 1802 did not affect the main source of income of the Civil Service, it is important as inaugurating the placing of money for such purposes on Supply. Hitherto no one had ever supposed that money could be provided year by year for Civil Government. Regarded always as one of the functions of the Crown, Civil Government was supported in the same way as all the other functions of the Crown. Since the Restoration the custom had always been to vote the King a certain annual sum for his lifetime, to maintain the dignity of his Court and to carry on the Government of his realm. The procedure was that which is still adopted at the beginning of a new reign, in the voting of the Civil List ; the difference was that, until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Crown was supposed to govern, as well as to meet its Household expenses, out of the sum provided. The sum voted was no more subject to subsequent discussion than the Civil List is to-day. Once voted it had to be found annually out of the taxes specifically allotted for the purpose, or, after the invention by Pitt in 1787 of the Consolidated Fund, out of that fund. Obviously, either the enlargement of the sum or its diminution would be a serious matter, because such a change would not affect a single year, but would have to be as permanent as the orignial vote. Increases

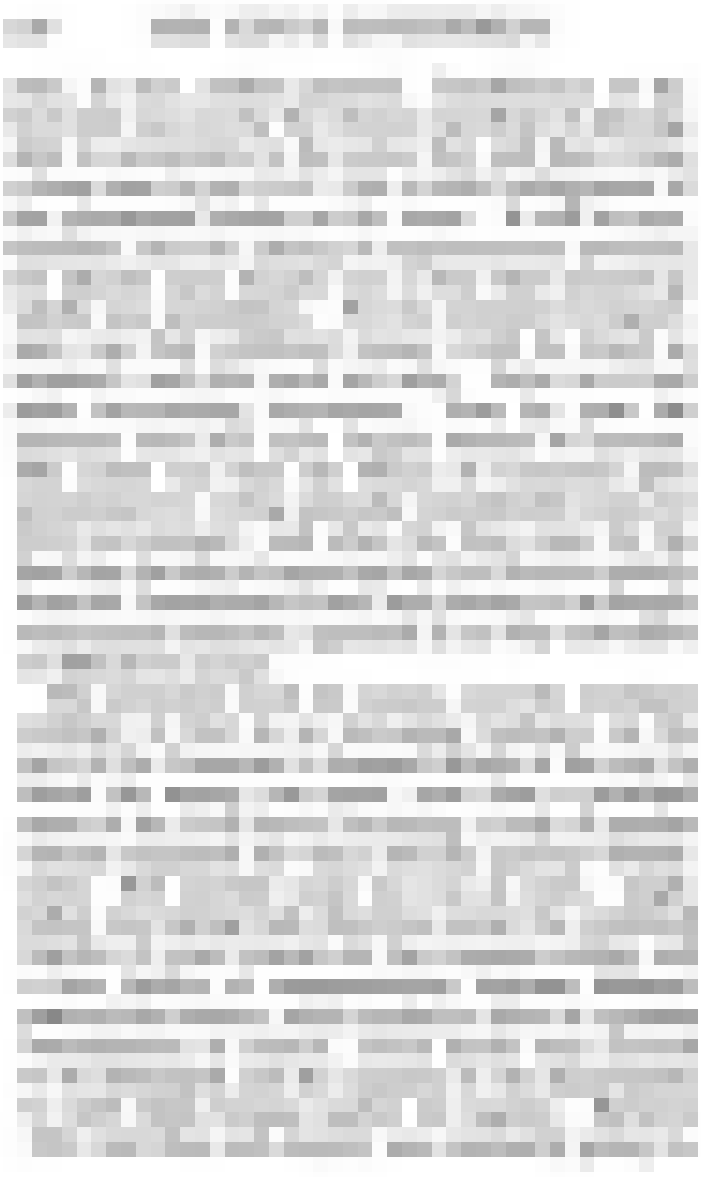


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were, in fact, seldom granted. Insufficiency of the Civil List was met by the clumsy expedient of allowing debt to accumulate in the salary list, and then voting a lump sum to pay it off; this avoided enlargement of the permanent burden on the taxes. It will be seen, therefore, that the placing of supplementary provision for salaries upon Supply was a step that opened up wholly new possibilities. For the moment its importance was that additional money could be found as required; and debt need not arise. Later on it had more far-reaching importance. Year by year the amounts thus laid upon Supply tended to increase. The result was that the House of Commons grew accustomed to voting annually considerable sums for Civil Government; and when the time came for the final step the idea of removing the Civil Service entirely from the Consolidated Fund, and placing it on Supply with annual estimates, appeared in no way subversive or difficult to accept.

The persistent need for money, and the necessary corollary of that in an increasing tendency on the part of the Commons to demand details of the way in which the money was spent, were thus a principal cause of the Civil Service becoming a body of persons directly employed by—since directly paid by—Parliament. But another cause too was at work. Legislation was taking fresh directions under the combined impulse of a new concern for the common welfare and a new facility of communication between different parts of the country, which tended to allow of a greater centralisation of control. Fresh duties thus accrued to be discharged, and the capacity of the departments to meet them became matter for inquiry. Between 1820 and 1835 such inquiry was constantly going on,



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The Service and the Fee System

We may continue to pursue first the reform in the method of providing money, since that was the more fundamental change. When we consider the apparent slowness of the Commons to take in hand the payment of the Civil Service, we must remember that it was not at that time the straightforward matter which it is to-day. We have seen that, from a very early stage in the history of the Service, men employed in it were not, as a rule, paid regular salaries. They were either allowed to support themselves by a system of fees, or they were given places of profit which might have nothing to do with their work.[1] We have also seen how the fee system allowed for extensions of the departments which would have been impossible, or, at any rate, long delayed, if they had involved increasing salary charges on the Civil List.[2] Thus from necessity, and to some extent (paradoxical though it

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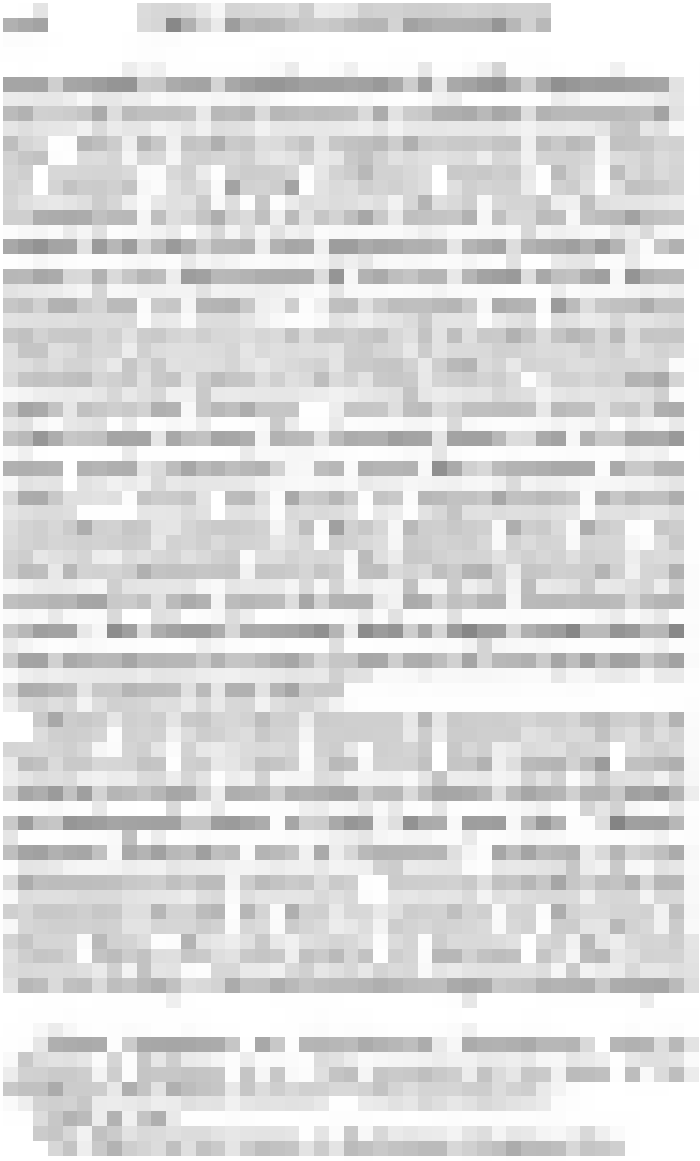
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There were thus three sources of income for the Civil Service—the fee fund, the Civil List (paying some salaries outright, and making up others which obtained an inadequate share of fees), and now the "Miscellaneous Estimates out of Supplies," making up the deficiencies of the Civil List. It is no wonder that the Commons should be slow to perceive in the last of these three—the sole source of income of the Civil Service to-day—the method which ought to be developed

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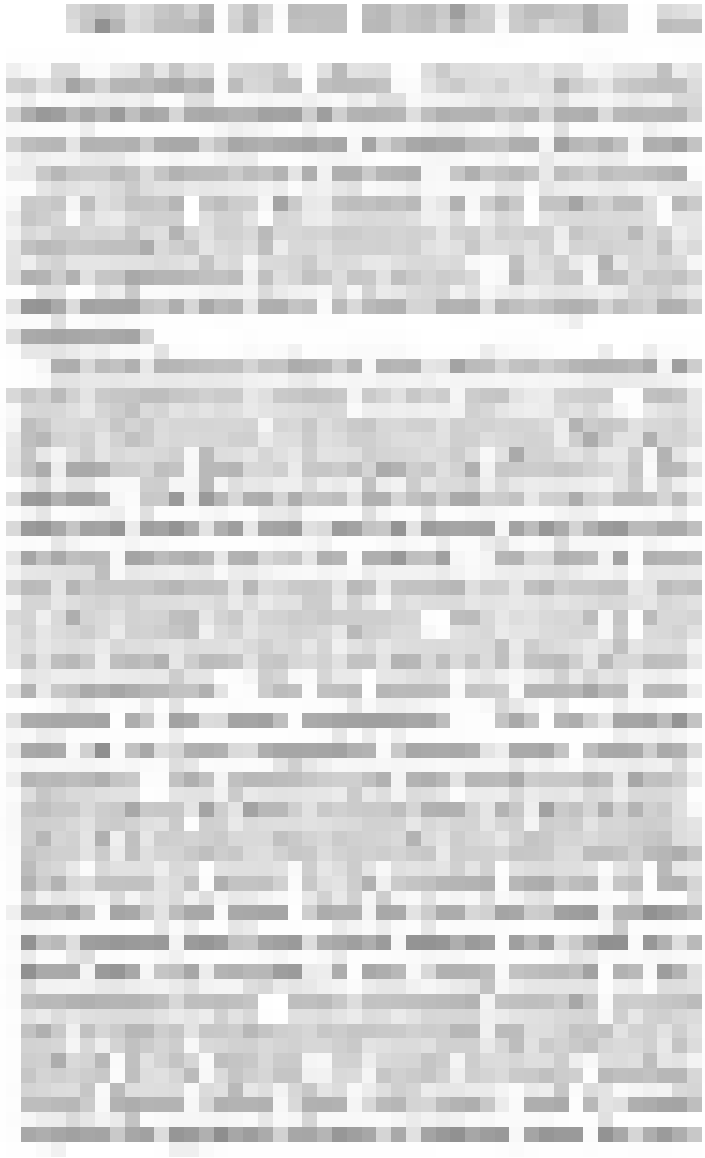
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The first Return is that of 1821, and it is confined to those employed at a salary of over £200 a year. The object, that is to say, was rather to cast some light upon the salary list than to investigate the efficiency of the officials. The Return gives the details for 1793 side by side with those for 1821, and in almost every case two striking features are to be noticed. The first is that the remunerations in 1793 are usually in odd sums, and in 1821 usually in round figures. The second is that in very many cases there is an apparently large advance of remuneration. The two points are probably susceptible of the same explanation. The fee system had, as we have suggested, become more carefully organised. The process is put into words in the statement made by the Privy Council Office for this Return; where it is remarked that formerly fees added anything from £1000 to £2000 to the nominal salaries of the clerks, but that since 1808 the fees had been placed to a general fund from which salaries were paid at a fixed rate, the surplus, if any, being carried to the Consolidated Fund. This movement towards a fixed rate of salary would account for both the points to be noticed in the Return; it would obviously produce round figures rather than odd sums; and it would explain the apparent advance of salaries, since the new



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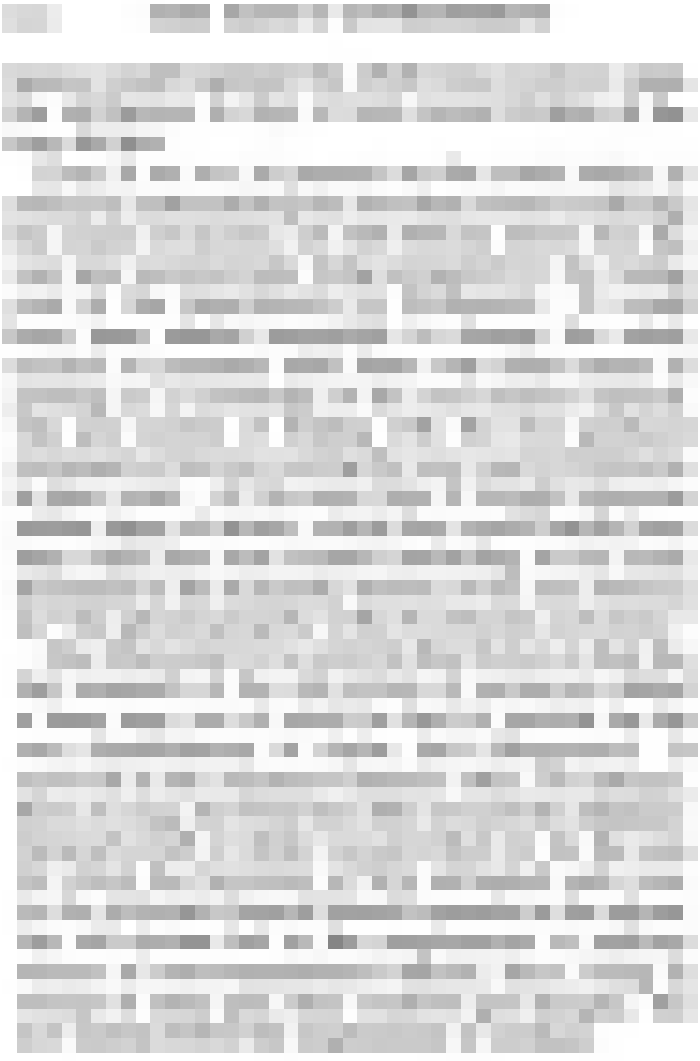
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One other point to be noted in this Return is that the last remnants of the old system of paying an official a lump sum, out of which he had to provide for his own establishment of clerks, had disappeared. It survived in the Adjutant-General's office, for instance, down to 1799, but from that date onward the Adjutant-General's staff of clerks was provided for by the sum for which the Secretary at War estimated each year. As the Adjutant-General himself remarks in the return, the old system led to the employment of military officers or non-commissioned officers, since, being in receipt of army pay, they could be got cheaply ; the new system led to the employment of civilians.

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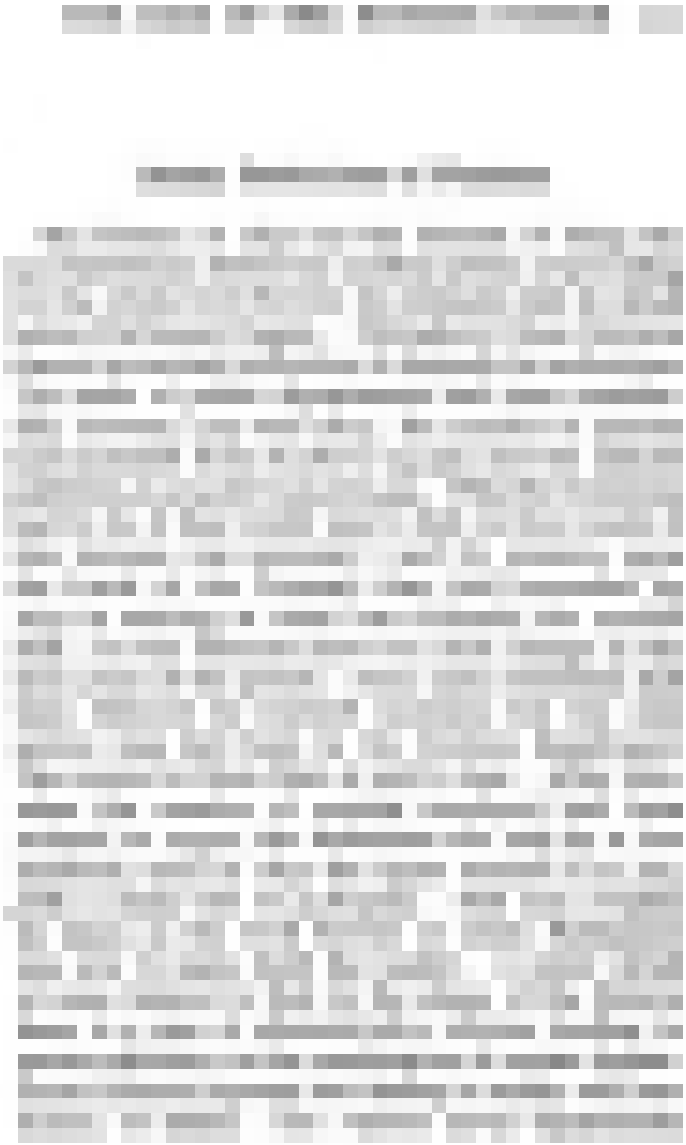
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Steady Reductions of Numbers

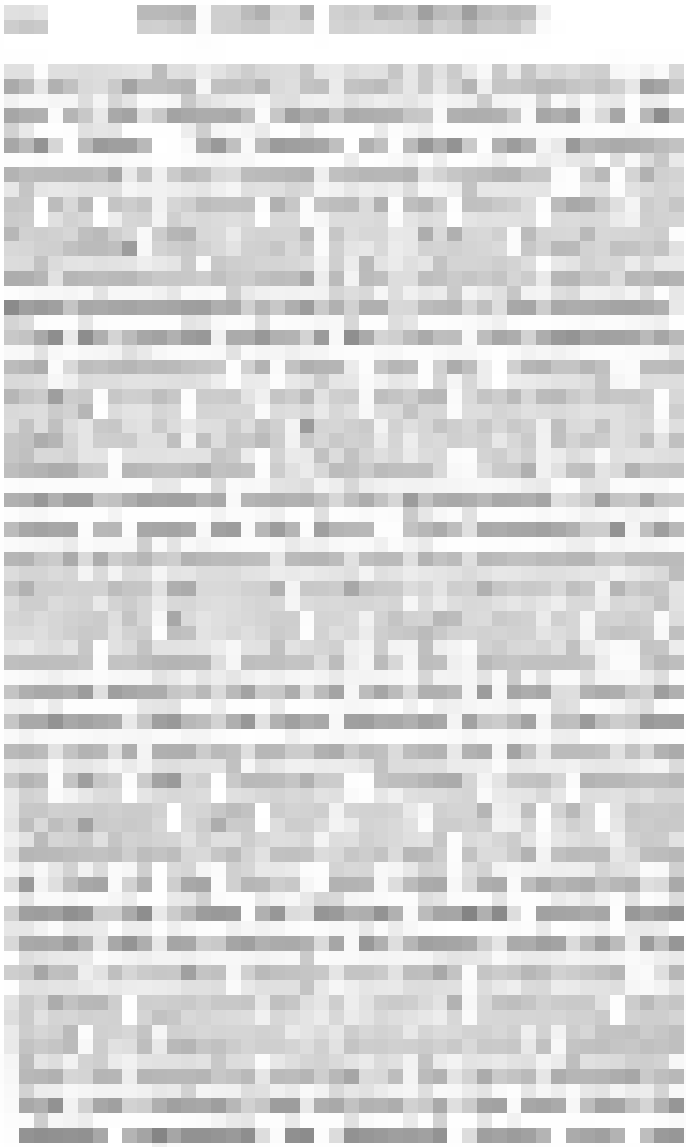
The Return of 1832 has the interest of being the last full Return before the modern system of providing for the whole Civil Service by estimates laid in detail before Parliament began. Throughout these Returns there is a constant indication of demands for reductions. The staffs of public departments had risen considerably between 1797 and 1815; the number of persons had increased from 16,267 to 24,598, and the salaries paid from £1,374,561 to £3,202,439. What the Commons had to do, if they could, was to find out how much of this increase was necessary; and by pressure upon the Lords of the Treasury they had succeeded by 1832 in arriving at what was evidently the needful staff; for the Returns show but little change in the later years of the period. Some early reductions had been followed by renewed increases, but the only serious ones had been in the Customs department. The reason for them there is pretty clear. After 1827, when the number of persons employed had been reduced to 22,912, the reductions are only by a few hundreds, until in 1832 the figure reached is 21,305, with a salary list of £2,819,622. This may roughly be taken as the Civil Service of which Parliament was now to make itself the master. A minor detail of some interest is that in the shape of the Return there is a sign of administrative reforms tending to greater efficiency in the combination of certain departments hitherto separate but dealing in reality with one branch of affairs. The various naval departments



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are put together under the head of the Admiralty, and two of the military departments under that of the War Office. The former of these two groupings represents a real change already legalised. In 1832 an Act was passed by which the Navy Office and Victualling Office ceased to be distinct departments, and became sub-divisions of the Admiralty, each being more or less assigned to one of the Lords of the Admiralty. Thus the general policy of the Navy, the construction and maintenance of ships, the pay, clothing, and feeding of the men, were at length controlled from a single office by a single Board, of which the head was a Minister responsible to Parliament. Only one naval concern remained outside this arrangement—the provision of guns for the fleet. This remained in the hands of the Ordnance Office, the idea presumably being that as that office must continue to exist for the Army, it would be the reverse of a simplification to make a second ordnance authority in the Admiralty. The curious result of this in our own day is that, since the Ordnance Office has been absorbed in the War Office the cost of making and testing guns for the Navy is on the War Office estimates. Possibly some different arrangement might have been made if the Army administration had been reformed at the same time as that of the Navy. But with the exception of placing the Office for Military Boards, which dealt chiefly with the clothing of the troops, under the War Office, no further change was made at this time. It probably appeared less in need of alteration, since much of its separation, no more practical or justifiable than the separation existing in the naval administration, was rendered less obvious by the fact that the officials responsible for detached duties were not



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created for the purpose, but had assumed the duties as coming under the heads of their other duties. The reason may have been that, owing to the distrust and suspicion with which the growth of a standing army had had to contend, the authorities felt it wise to call as little attention as possible to that growth, and therefore avoided creating departments. Thus the Commissariat business was transacted by the Treasury, and the forces kept on the Home establishment were in the department of the Home Secretary.

The Civil Service in 1832

The departments on the Return for 1832 are as follows :—

Departments.	*Number Employed.*
Treasury	115
Secretary of State : Home	30
,, ,, Foreign	39
,, ,, Colonies	33
Privy Council Office	17
,, for Trade	25
Audit Office	95
Admiralty	723
Ordnance Office	824
Customs Office	9459
Excise Office	6377
Stamps Office	458
Taxes Office	275
Post Office	1815
Mint Office	30
War Office	87
Army Pay Office	54
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Departments.	*Number Employed.*
Quartermaster-General's Office	24
Adjutant-General's Office	28
Judge Advocate General's Office	7
Army Medical Board	13
Chaplain General's Department	1
Chelsea Hospital	162
Alien Office	8
Stationery Office	36
Register of Colonial Slaves Office	4
State Paper Office	6
Army Accounts Office	28
National Debt Office	32
Auditor's Office, Exchequer	20
Teller of the Exchequer	6
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Clerk of the Pells Office	13
Exchequer Bill Office	11
Auditors Land Revenue Office	11
Barons of Exchequer, Scotland	34
Woods and Forests Office	91

There were in addition nineteen departments in Ireland, but with the exception of the Chief Secretary's, the Privy Council, and Privy Seal Offices, they were mostly military departments.

This Return was speedily followed by an important and long overdue reform. The Exchequer accounted for no fewer than ten separate departments on this list—the offices of the Auditor, the National Debt, the four Tellers, the Clerk of the Pells, the Exchequer Bills, the Auditors of the Land Revenue, and the Barons of the Exchequer in Scotland. Yet with all this the continued existence of the Exchequer was no more than a habit of government, and it had become a bad habit. The real knowledge of finance, of the taxable capacity of the country, and of the currents



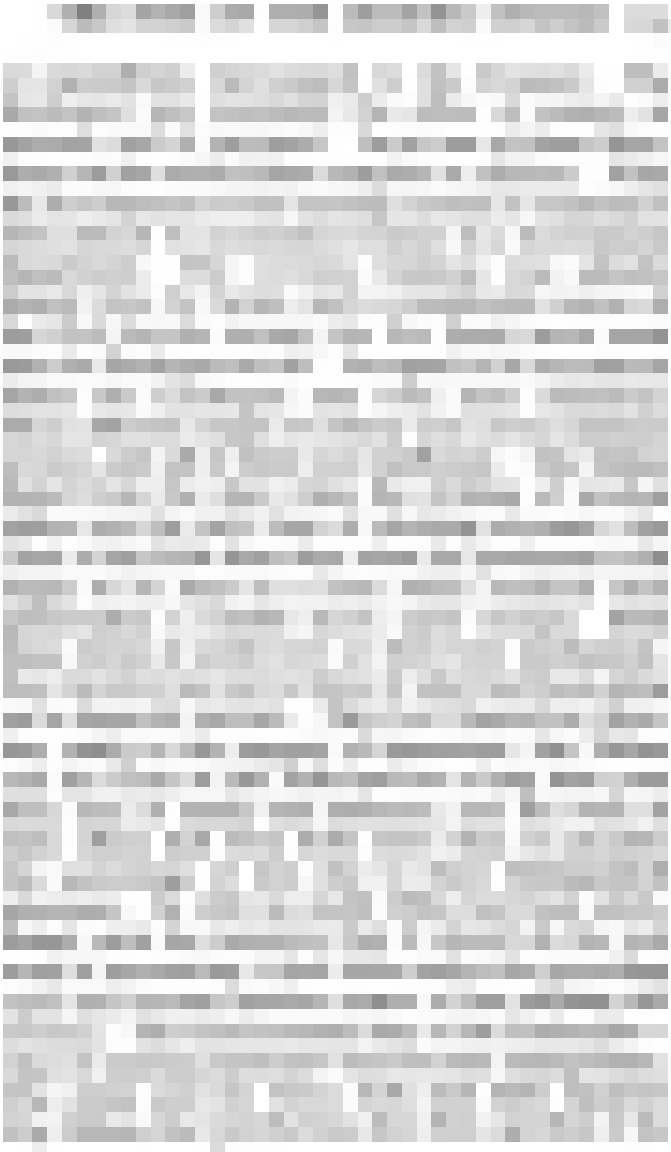
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of expenditure, had passed to the Treasury. The Exchequer was nominally the office of receipt, of account, and of payment. In no one of these directions was its action either complete or efficient. With the development of the banking system it would have been absurd to accumulate treasure in a Government department. The revenue business was already largely done by banks, and a considerable source of the Civil Service income, the Fee Fund, never went into the Exchequer at all. In regard to its accountant duties the Exchequer was even more ridiculous. Three different stages of reform were all in existence at once, and all of them were inefficient. The Tellers dated from the days when the striking of wooden tallies was the only form of checking accounts; the Clerk of the Pells from days when the parchment rolls began to be kept in a form which rendered their preservation a further check upon receipts. Both these forms of audit were at their best mechanical; they involved no real revision of what had been going on in financial matters. They lent themselves therefore easily to the support of sinecurists; the Tellers and the Clerk of the Pells had for a long time past been men of family and influence, and the work of their offices had been little more than to calculate the percentage of fees due to these distinguished placemen. In 1780 an Audit Office had been established, with the intention that it should do the real work of accounting; it had fallen under the prevailing spell and become another source of fees milking the revenue. The third nominal duty of the Exchequer—that of making payments—had become unimportant. The Army and the Navy both had their separate Pay Offices, the Civil Service drew but a portion of its

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income from the Exchequer, and as for other payments the system of Treasury Warrants had become so exact that a department to attend to them after they were made out was quite unnecessary.

In 1834 the whole Exchequer establishment was swept away without difficulty. The Bank of England was made the office of receipt of the revenue. An Auditor and Comptroller-General with an efficient staff took over the business of account. A Paymaster of the Civil Service was appointed, to be merged two years later, with the Army and Navy Pay Offices, in the office of the Paymaster-General, who attends to the payment of salaries in all departments.

The New Conception of Government

We may now turn to the other line along which the impulse for reform was acting — namely, the creation of new public duties and the centralising of control.

The appointment of a third Secretary of State in 1794, and the new apportionment of duties between the two others, whereby one became specifically Secretary for Home Affairs, were perhaps the first indications of an increasing concern for the internal well-being of the country. A Home Secretary, it must have been presumed, was likely to have enough to do, in dealing with the administration of justice, the control of prisons, the Post Office, etc., to occupy a whole department. It is doubtful whether his duties at that time would be considered full work for a department

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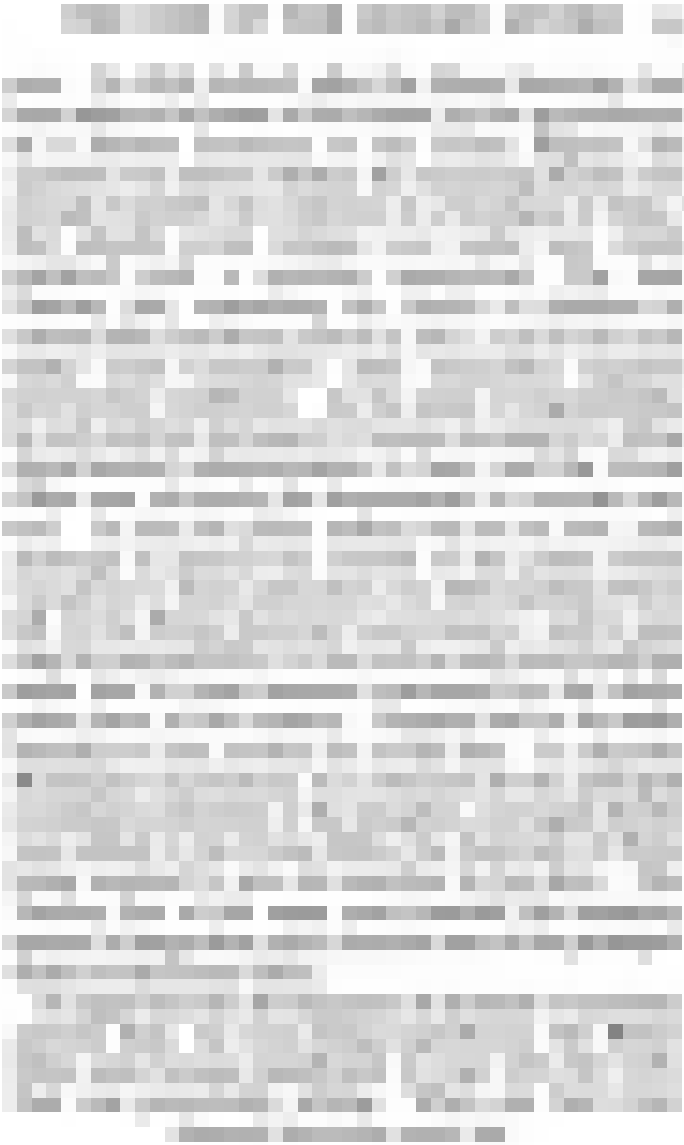
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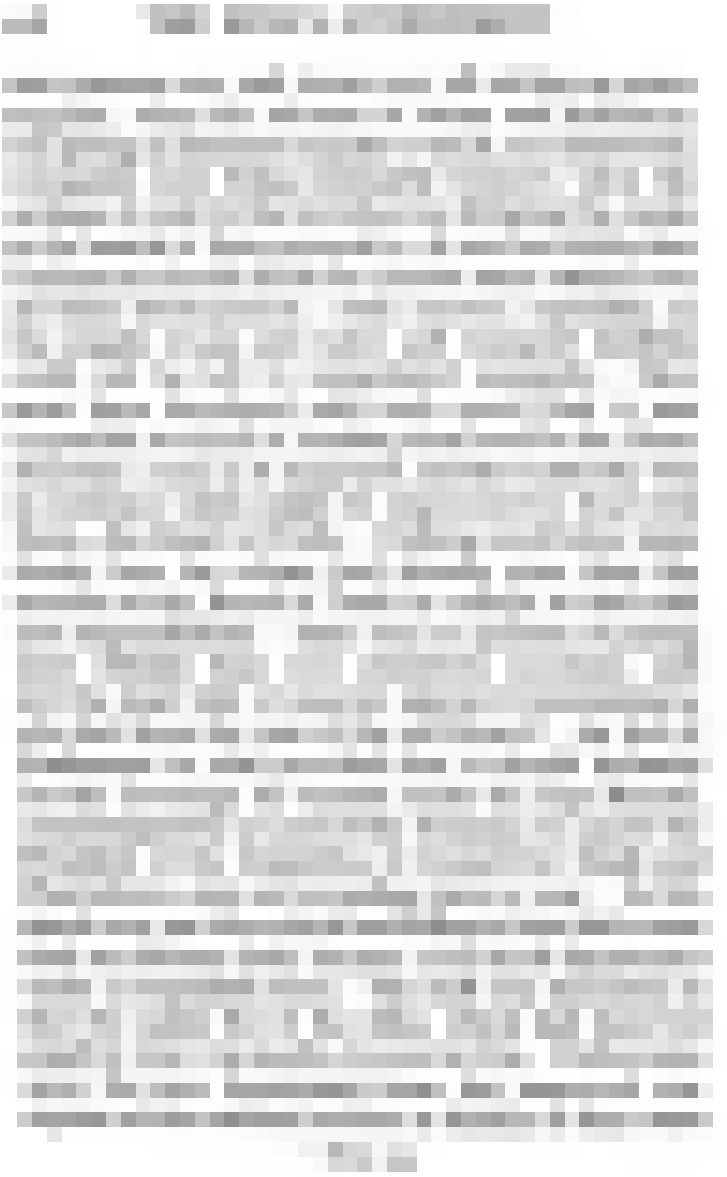
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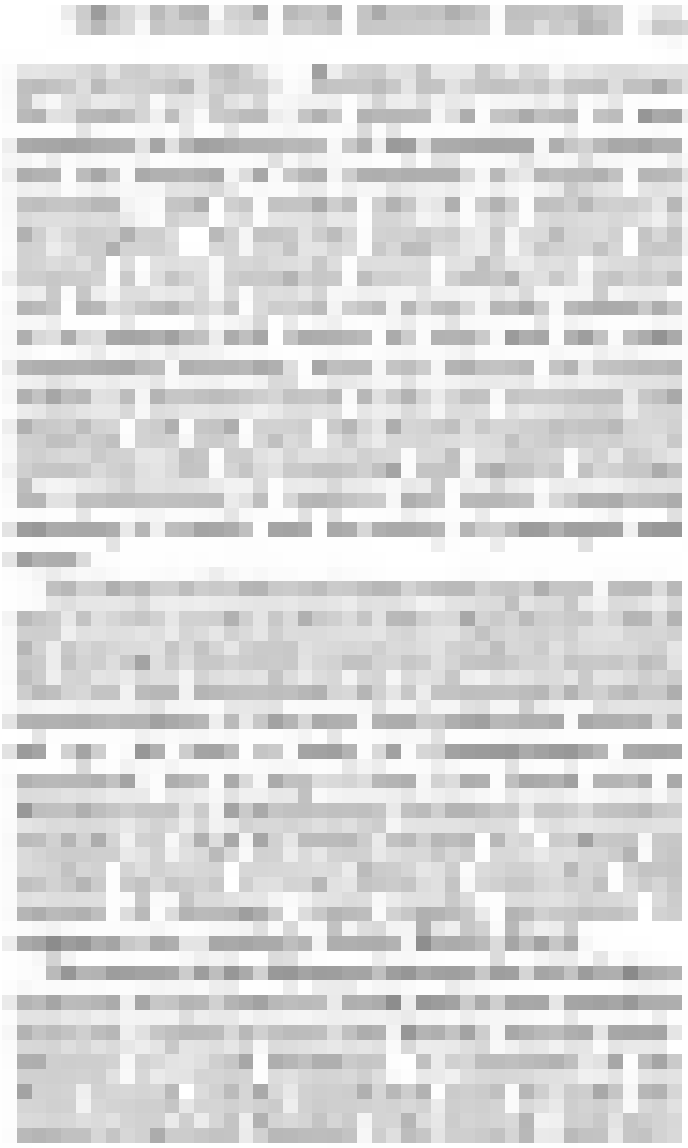
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The Board of Trade had taken working shape just in time to serve as the model of other departments which the stirring of the public conscience rendered necessary. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 required central superintendence of the new local authorities which it set up. At first a body of Commissioners were appointed; but in 1847 a Poor Law Board with a President and a Parliamentary Secretary was created. Similarly, in 1848 the Public Health Act, setting up another network of local duties in connection with matters of drainage, water supply, prevention of nuisances, etc., created a Public Health Board.

The essence of the difference between the old advisory character of the Board of Trade and its new executive character, copied in these later Boards, was the establishment of a paid President. A Committee of the Privy Council, strictly constituted, must be under the control of the Lord President of the Council; and, since



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he has no executive functions, the decisions of such a body could only issue in action by a Secretary of State or by the Treasury. The creation of a paid President permitted of the attachment to his office by statute of power to make Orders and Regulations. But it should be noted that, before this step was taken, an attempt had been made to give more value and responsibility to the old advisory work of the Committee by attaching a salary to the office of Vice-President; this had been done in 1817.[1] That precedent was followed when, in 1834, the affairs of Elementary Education were first taken more seriously in hand. The system of elementary education was still, at this date, mainly unofficial; it was organised by voluntary societies, and (as we have seen) the share of the government had been limited to a very clumsy and vaguely limited provision of grants of public money. Something had to be done to assist the work of the Treasury, both by justifying the grants (on which there had been only the most primitive checks) and by securing some means of estimating the requirements to be made of the Treasury. Obviously, however, this kind of work could be reconciled with the functions of the older kind of Committee of Council, being essentially advisory. Therefore, when such a Committee was appointed in 1834, it was not modelled on the new Board of Trade, but followed the line of the Act of 1817, the Lord President being the head of the office, with a paid Vice-President.

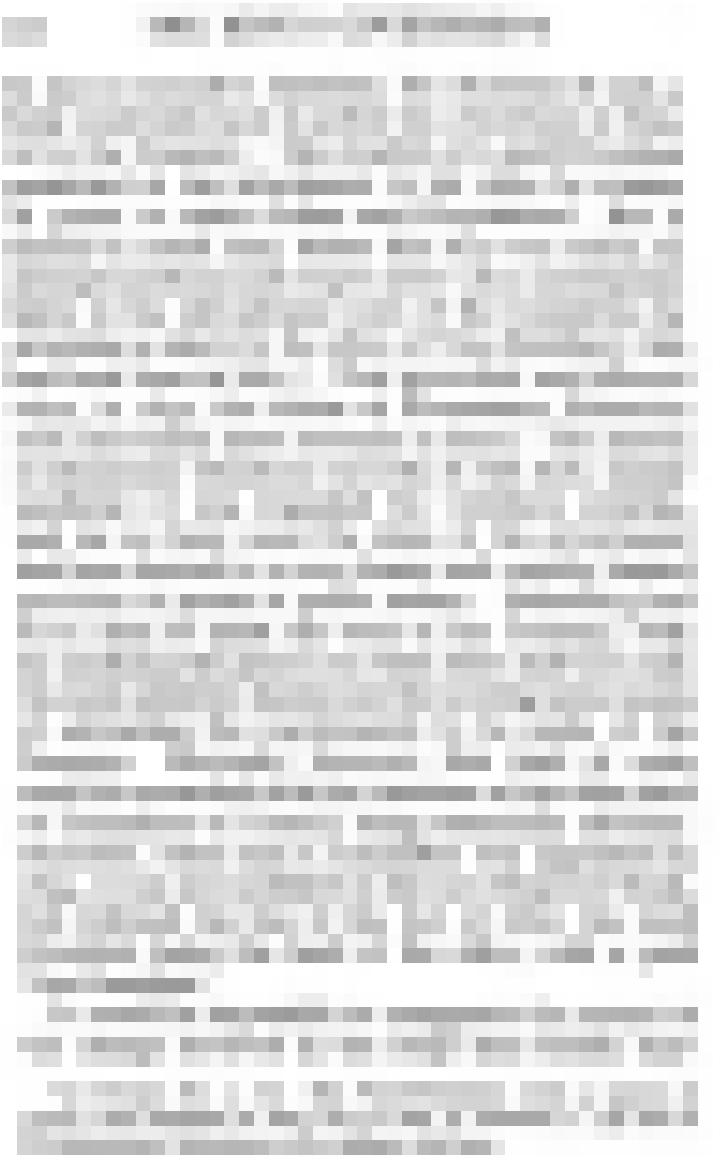
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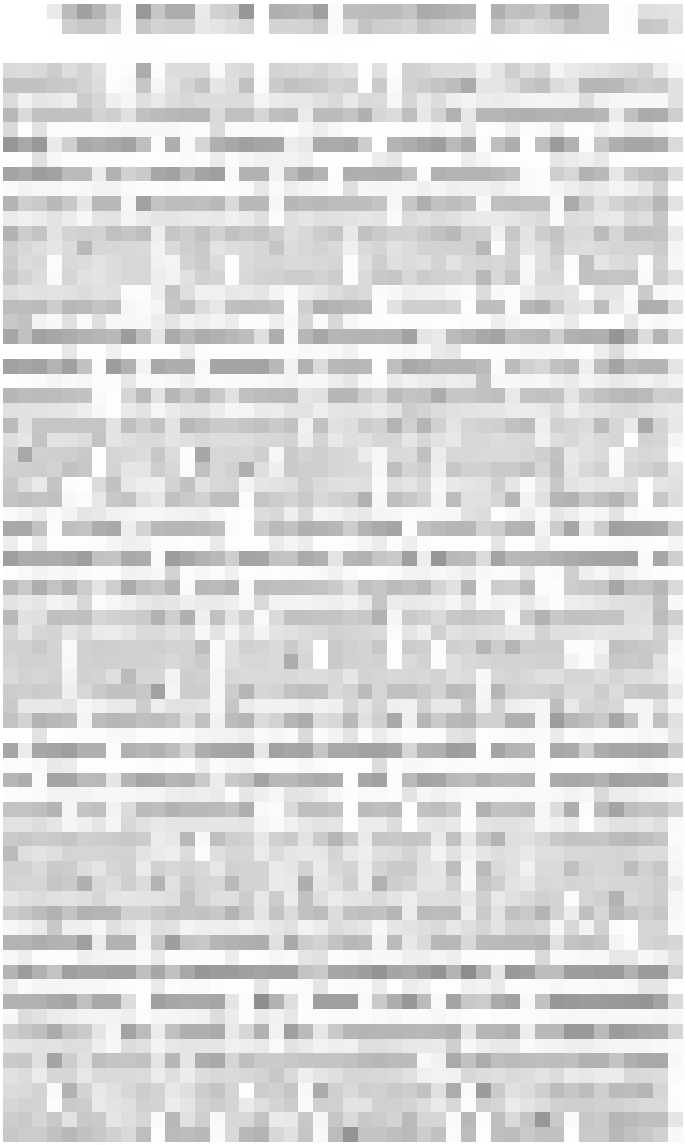
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The Final Change of Control

It has been necessary to dwell upon this point, because the result was that at the next stage a step of great importance was taken, as has often happened in our constitutional history, without any discussion of principle. The habit of administration preceded the formal undertaking of it; and this habit had grown up as unconsciously as the habit of expecting Ministers to account for their actions in Parliament had grown up. Hardly a word of debate accompanied the ultimate changes in the control of the public services, which took place in 1848 and 1855. The former was a change in the method of providing money for the Civil Service, the latter a change in the method of making appointments to the service.

The reform of 1848 was quietly effected, being the logical conclusion of a gradual process. We have seen the appearance of certain "Miscellaneous Estimates" out of Supply for the Civil Service, and have also seen

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It has been necessary to dwell upon this point, because the result was that at the next stage a step of great importance was taken, as has often happened in our constitutional history, without any discussion of principle. The habit of administration preceded the formal undertaking of it; and this habit had grown up as unconsciously as the habit of expecting Ministers to account for their actions in Parliament had grown up. Hardly a word of debate accompanied the ultimate changes in the control of the public services, which took place in 1848 and 1855. The former was a change in the method of providing money for the Civil Service, the latter a change in the method of making appointments to the service.

The reform of 1848 was quietly effected, being the logical conclusion of a gradual process. We have seen the appearance of certain "Miscellaneous Estimates" out of Supply for the Civil Service, and have also seen





that they were merely supplementary payments. The main bulk of the cost of the service came out of fees and the Consolidated Fund, and was therefore not subject to debate at all.[1] The Estimates, such as they were, did not correspond to what we now understand by that term. The Treasury collected estimates from each department, but did not send them on *in detail* to the House of Commons, nor were they printed.[2] As the cost of the service increased, more and more permanent charges came on to these Miscellaneous Estimates; and certain changes in classification were introduced in 1824, 1837, and 1843.[3] At last, in 1847, a Select Committee was appointed, which commented adversely on the combination of permanent expenses with temporary and casual ones under the head of "Miscellaneous Estimates," and recommended that "for the future the votes for Civil Establishments at home and abroad . . . be arranged under the head of Civil Estimates and presented separately to the House."

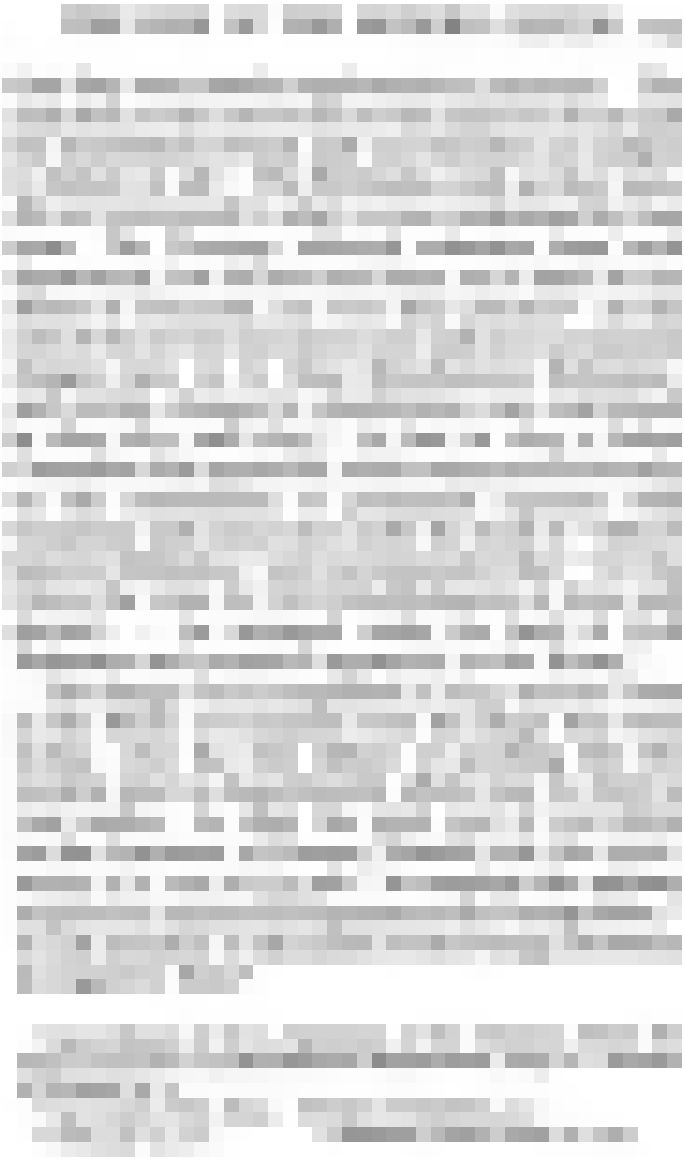
The change was accomplished in 1849, and the Votes in the House of Commons took the shape they bear to-day. But the first debate of anything like the modern kind on departmental affairs may be dated a year earlier. In 1848, the great year of convulsion on the Continent of Europe, Disraeli took the opportunity of a vote of £57,500 "to complete the amount required for salaries and expenses at the Foreign Office," to call attention to the action of the Foreign Secretary in regard to Italy.[4]

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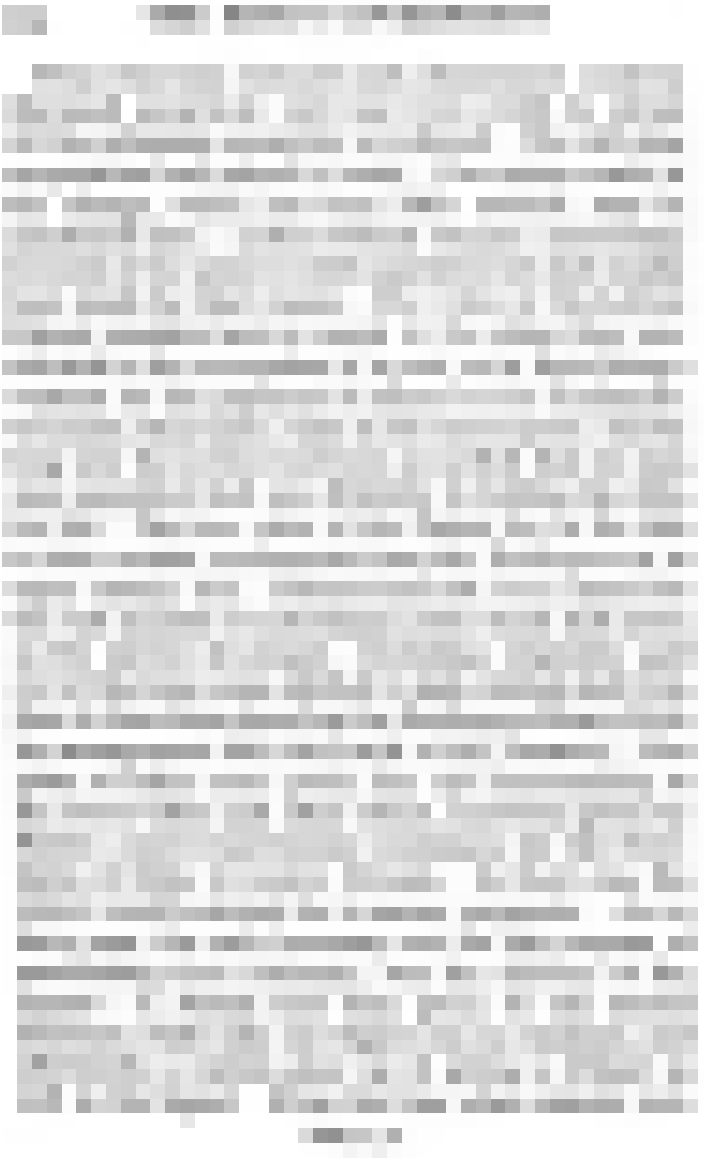
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From this time forward each department could be discussed separately, and any item could be struck off the estimates separately or reduced. The old close corporation had ceased to exist. One minor result of the change, which has been little noticed, may be mentioned here. Letters Patent became unnecessary for most of the posts to which appointments had usually been made by that means. The value of the Letters Patent consisted not so much in the claim they constituted to the occupation of a post, as in their being a warrant for the payment of salary by the Exchequer. Of course, they had a value in the first respect; but for long now the service had been so settled that no man once appointed had any difficulty in holding his office for life. The true value of the Patent lay in the title to take certain emoluments from the Exchequer or to enjoy certain fees. Patents had not been issued for the vast number of subordinate posts which had arisen as the service developed. Clerkships originally paid out of the lump sums allotted to high officials had from time to time been placed on the Exchequer Money Book by arrangement with the Lords of the Treasury. But posts of rather more profit, like the Secretaryship to the Navy Office and other offices, had been given by Patent; and it had become customary for the Secretaries of State to receive Patents. In their case the object would certainly be to secure payments. As we have seen, the only necessary act for the purpose of establishing their authority, was the delivery of the Signet.[1] A Patent had been given to the second Secretary while only one Signet was in existence, and afterwards a custom grew up of giving a Patent as well as the Signet. From the time when salaries were

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The Reform of the Staff

The reform of 1855 was not quite such a simple process as that of 1837. Although salaries were now paid by Parliament, nothing had been done to alter the constitution of the staff. It was inevitable that, once the Civil Service had become a body of public officials, there should be a disposition to insist upon the appointments to the Service being of a more public character. A number of Committees were engaged between 1848 and 1854 in investigating the conditions of appointment and the general state of the Service. They found a good many remnants of the comfortable old system still existing. In the Treasury there was a kind of examination of candidates before appointment, and a year's probation before the appointment was confirmed; in certain other offices there was some examination, but no probation; in others, such as the Colonial Office,

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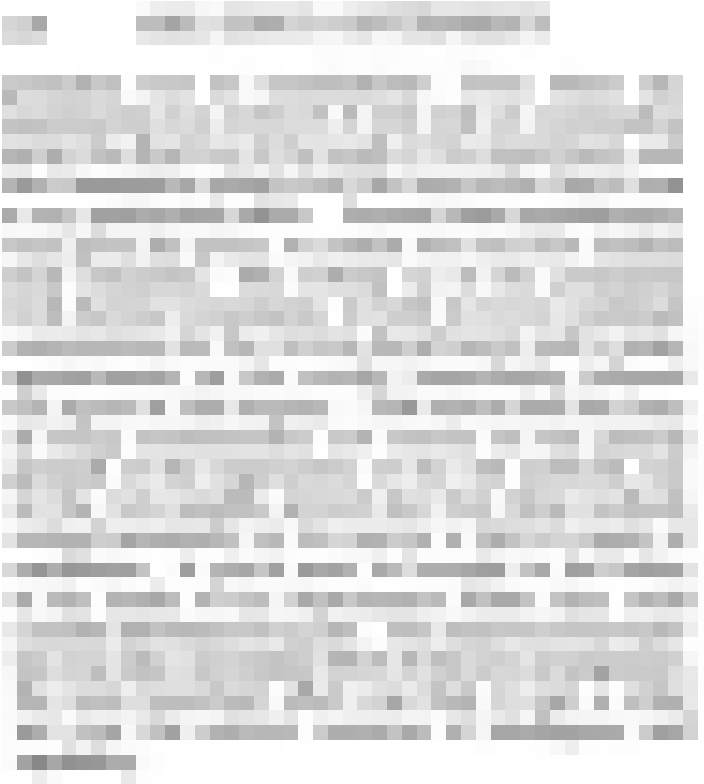
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Exposure of the Old Conditions

The condition of work in the public offices reflected, of course, some of the disadvantages (from the point of view of the national business) of the methods of appointment. Much work was left undone, or ill done, because the Service proper was jealously confined to

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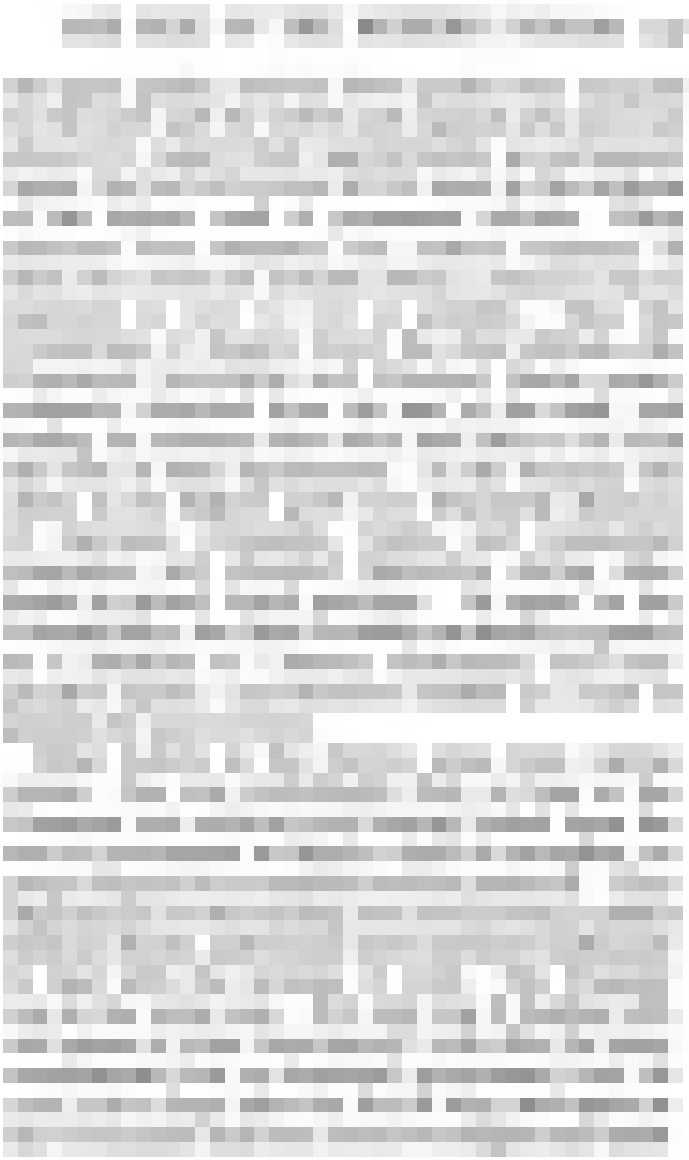
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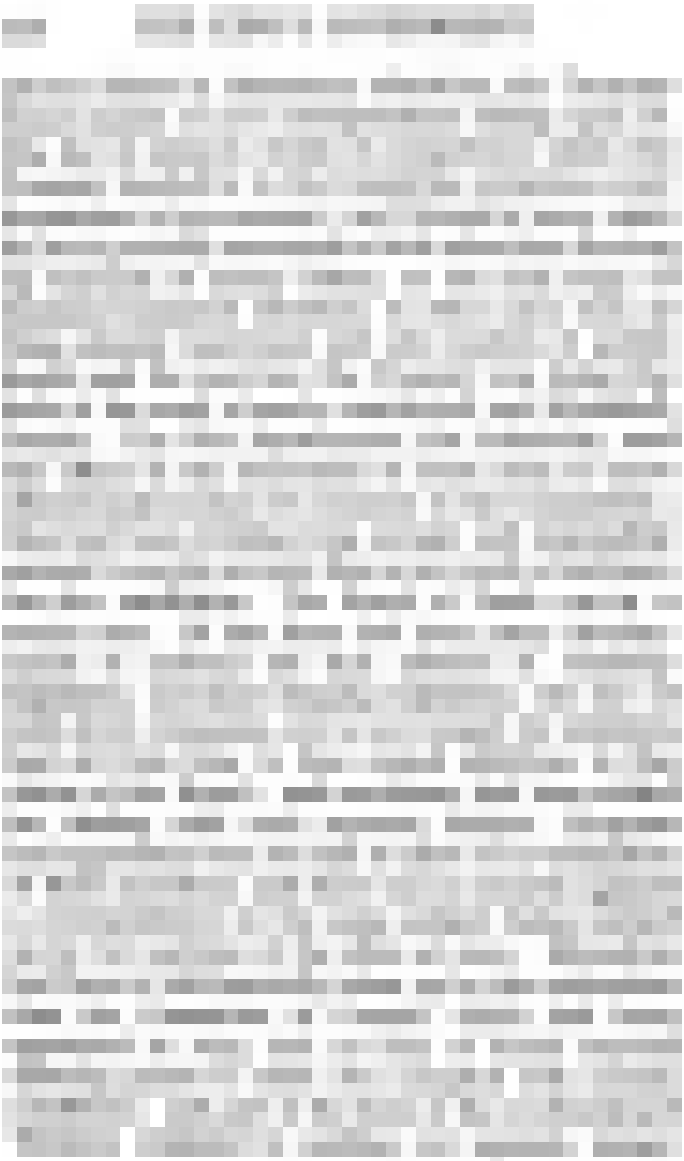
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private efforts in elementary education, the Treasury found masses of new correspondence falling upon it. The list of subjects within its competence which the Treasury handed in to the Committee comprises every department of government; and though in many cases the work probably amounted to little more than drawing up warrants or money letters, as the final stage of business transacted elsewhere, in other cases, such as those already mentioned, and also matters of public health and the poor law, the Treasury was doing the bulk of the work of newly constituted, and ill-staffed, Boards. The War departments, the Admiralty, and the offices of the Secretaries of State seem to have offered small surface for comment to the Committees; they had been working long enough and responsibly enough to require no more than a new mode of entrance for new candidates. The Board of Trade was in a sorrier case. Of late there had been many developments of national life that affected it. Railway legislation, merchant shipping legislation, the rise of joint-stock companies, and a new respect for statistics had all from time to time caused additions to the duties of the Board; and machinery had been added for dealing with each separate subject. Progress had apparently been too fast to allow of co-ordination of these accretions, and there was no security against a correspondence on the same subject being carried on by two sections of the office at once. Education had been so half-heartedly taken up by the authorities that the Committee of Council, which had been appointed in 1839, had no idea of duties beyond allotting grants to those who complied with certain conditions; and part of the duty of the overburdened Treasury consisted in sending out separate money



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Other minor offices were passed by without much comment. The Poor Law Board and the Board of Health had grown up in consequence of recent legislation; and local government as yet meant so little that there was no reason why anyone should perceive the possibility of combining such departments as these into one larger office. Such correspondence of the time as can be said to concern local government — correspondence with municipalities, county treasurers, quarter sessions, clerks of the peace, and police authorities—was carried on by the Treasury.

Circumstances outside the work of these Committees brought about just now a combination of the detached departments of Army administration. The Crimean War had exposed grave weaknesses in the administrative system. After the naval departments had been united there was a natural inclination to ask why the piecemeal growth of the system should be perpetuated in the Army. Yet (perhaps because of the strong objections that had been raised earlier to a similar inclination) the first step was rather one of reorganisation than combination. It seems to have been thought that, if one person were made responsible for all the subdivisions of the civil administration of the army, the desired end might be attained. Consequently, instead of a downright transfer such as had taken place in naval administration,[1] a fourth

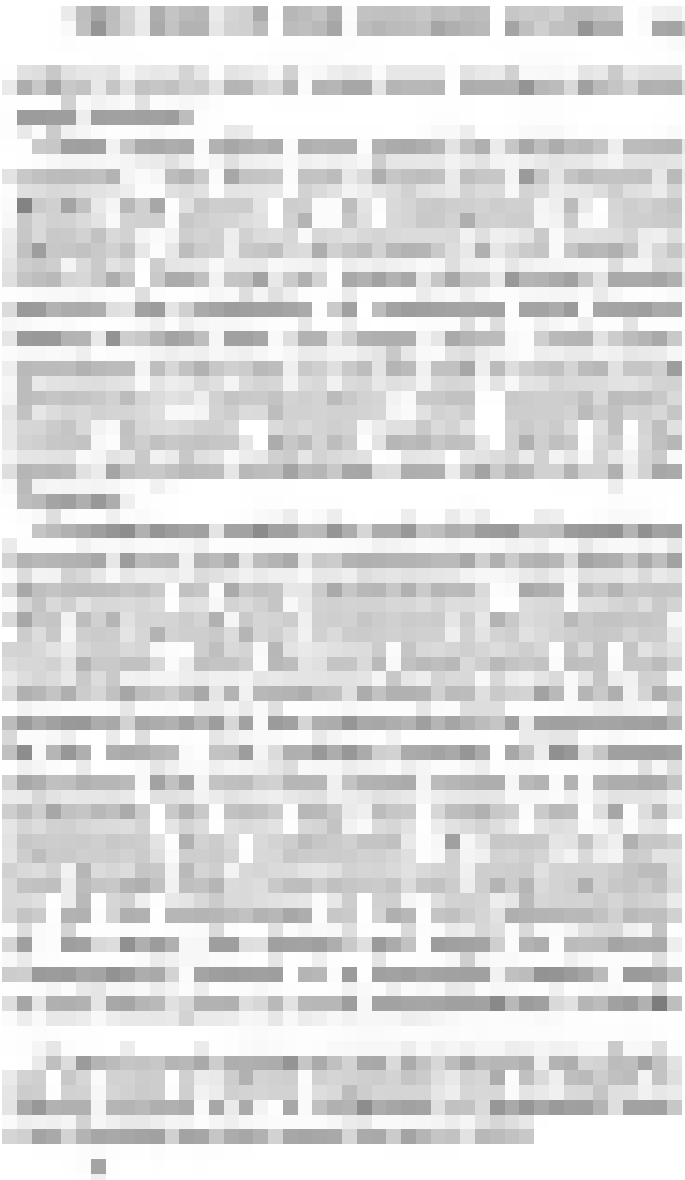
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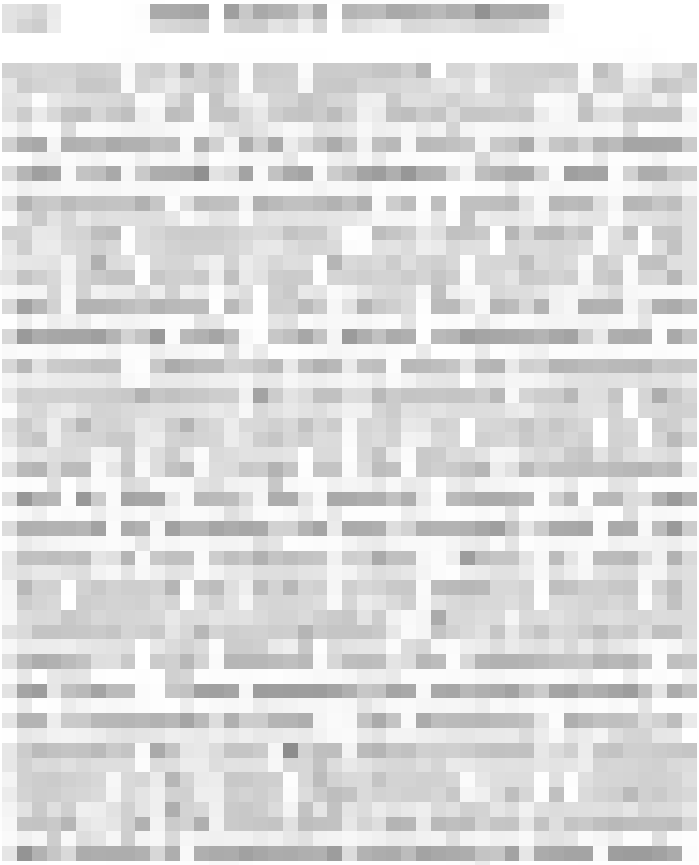
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Secretary of State was appointed, to answer for, and to control, all the military departments. In effect, the Secretary at War, who, as such, was co-ordinate with the heads of the Ordnance Office and other departments, was translated to a grade from which he could command them. The first holders of the new office were at once Secretaries of State for War and Secretaries at War, until the latter post was abolished in 1863. But actual combination had to be faced. Before the end of 1854 the Commissariat was transferred to the new department, early in 1855 the Home Office handed over its authority in the matter of the troops on the Home establishment, and in May 1855 the greatest change of all was effected by investing the new Secretary with all the powers of the Ordnance Office. When in 1856 he also assumed the duties of the Military Boards the combination was accomplished. But in one important respect it still differed from the administration of the Navy. There remained the conjoint authority of the Commander-in-Chief. The Admiralty, having represented the Lord High Admiral before it assumed control of the other departments, was a complete whole; the War Office had to see matters of promotion and details of organisation continuing in other hands.

The Building of the Government Offices

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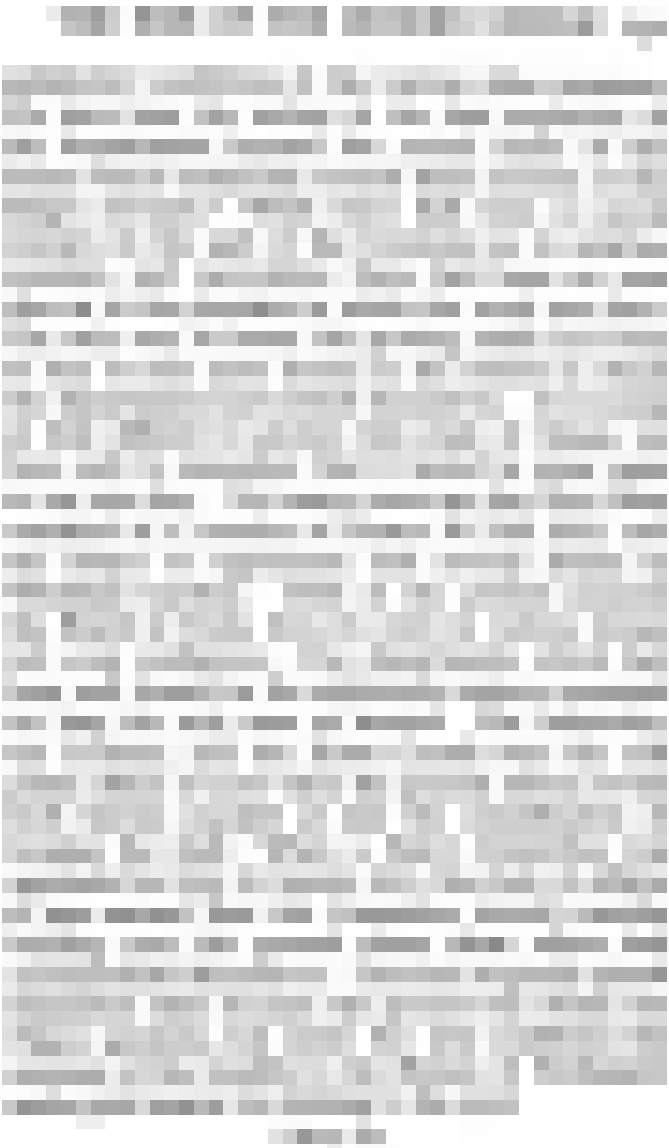
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satisfactory conditions of the various office premises. We have seen the nature of the first expansion of the departments beyond the actual limits of the Palace which technically housed these sections of the King's servants.[1] While there had been so much concern on the part of the Commons as to salaries, numbers, and perquisites, there had been no new idea as to the premises in which the work was done. The only way to house the growing staffs had been to buy or rent more houses in the streets in which the departments had settled themselves. If it seems at first difficult to picture this state of things, we have only to remember that it lasted in some cases to our own day. Not many years ago the War Office consisted of a number of houses in Pall Mall, and the Board of Agriculture had several houses in Whitehall Gardens; while at the present moment the Board of Trade does its work in various houses not even contiguous. The departments which had been well housed in the eighteenth century remained for long the only ones so treated. The Admiralty, the Treasury, and the Horse Guards were the sole public offices of note when the general reform of the Civil Service reached at last the consideration of housing the staff. When a Select Committee was appointed in 1855 to inquire into the state of affairs, it was natural that the Committee should consider building near the ground where these offices had accommodated themselves. They had originally placed themselves there because the ground was within the Palace precincts, but under the new conditions the nearness of the locality to the Houses of Parliament made good reason for sticking to the spot.

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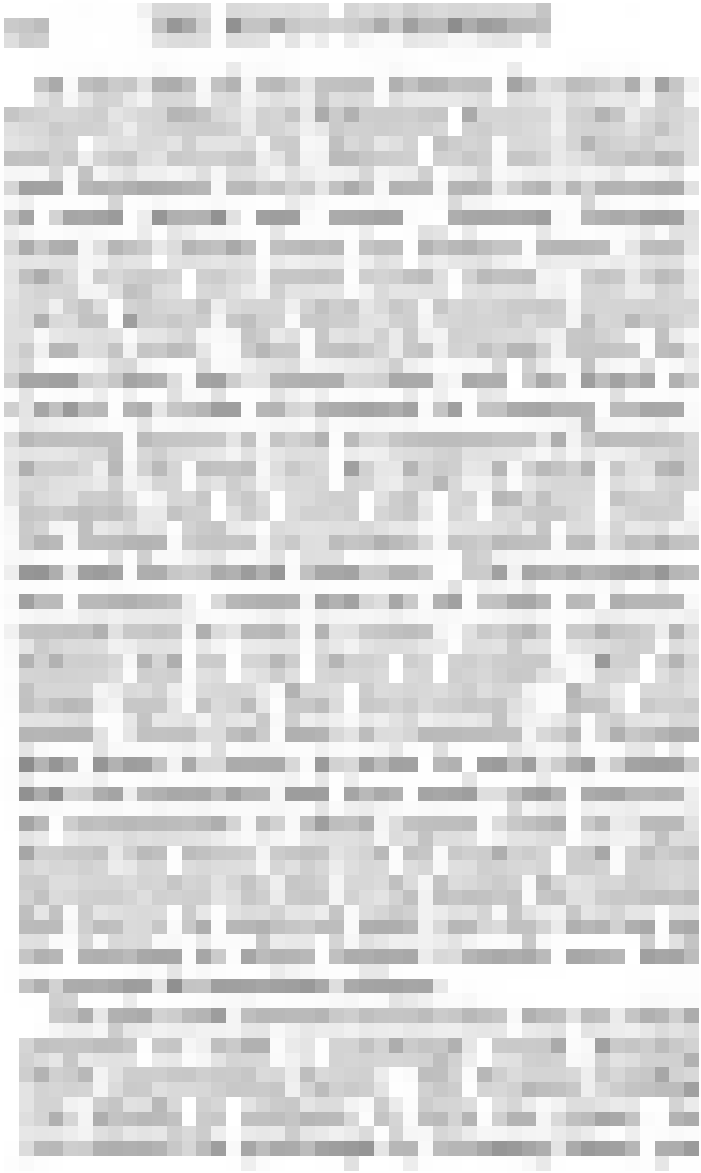
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At that date all the space between the end of the Treasury building and Parliament Square north and south, and between St. James's Park and Whitehall (and Parliament Street), west and east, was a network of small streets and courts. Between Downing Street and Charles Street lay Fludyer Street, Says Alley, Upper and Lower Crown Street; and this was the ground upon which the Committee proposed to set to work. They found the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Colonial Office, and the Board of Control for India all clustered in Downing Street, Downing Square (a kind of enlargement of Downing Street at the Park end, the shape of which is still traceable), and the north side of Fludyer Street. The Foreign Office, for instance, occupied six houses here and the Colonial Office two. The inconvenience was extreme; rooms were on all kinds of levels; copyists had to work in cellars; people calling on business had to wait about in passages. But the houses were worse than inconvenient; they were unsafe. Doors had been so frequently cut through from house to house, in order to unite the offices, that the structures had been made quite insecure; no accumulation of official papers could be kept, because the floors could not be trusted, and about ten years before the date of the inquiry the workmen had had to be employed night and day shoring up the building in which Cabinet Councils were held, to prevent an immediate collapse.

The plan most favoured at this time was one which proposed to build a quadrangle round Downing Street and Downing Square. The Treasury building was already in existence to form one corner. As you entered the quadrangle by Downing Street, you

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New Departments

When the East India Company's possessions and rights were vested in the Crown in 1858, there was an Act of Parliament laying the administration of them upon one of the Secretaries of State, it being left to the Queen to decide whether there should be a new Secretary. The Queen appointed a fifth Secretary; and the India Office grew up out of the old Board of Control. In 1871 Parliament, taking into consideration the mass of legislation that had been accumulating on matters of public health, the poor law, local government, etc., decided that the





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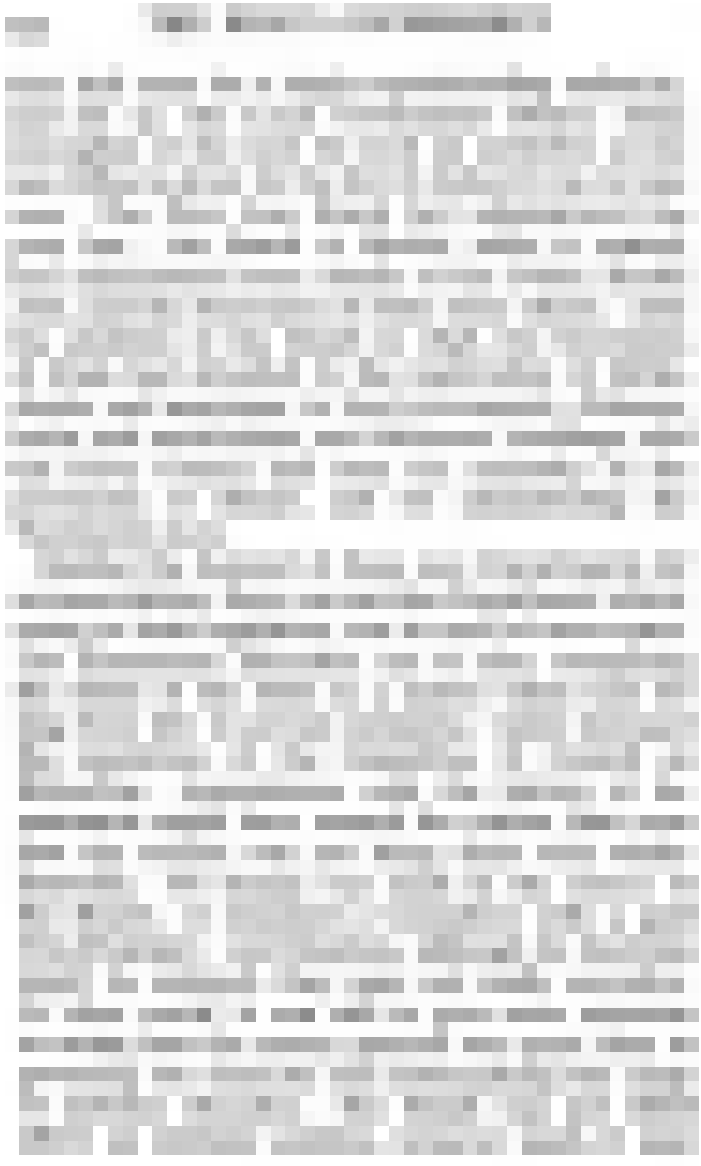
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Besides the demand of these new Departments for accommodation, there was another Department which, owing to fresh legislation, was in need of more space. The Elementary Education Act of 1870, recognising the duties of the State in a matter which had too long been left to private enterprise, vastly increased the operations of the Committee of Council on Education. Acquaintance with the history of departments might have warned the nation that even now the subject was not being dealt with wholeheartedly. No change was made in the nature of the Board; it remained a Committee with a paid Vice-President; and therefore, although its functions might be enlarged, they were not really executive. In other words, it was still to give more attention to seeing how the money granted was spent than to governing the character and systematising the range of national education. The Board was not lifted above an advisory position, however much it may

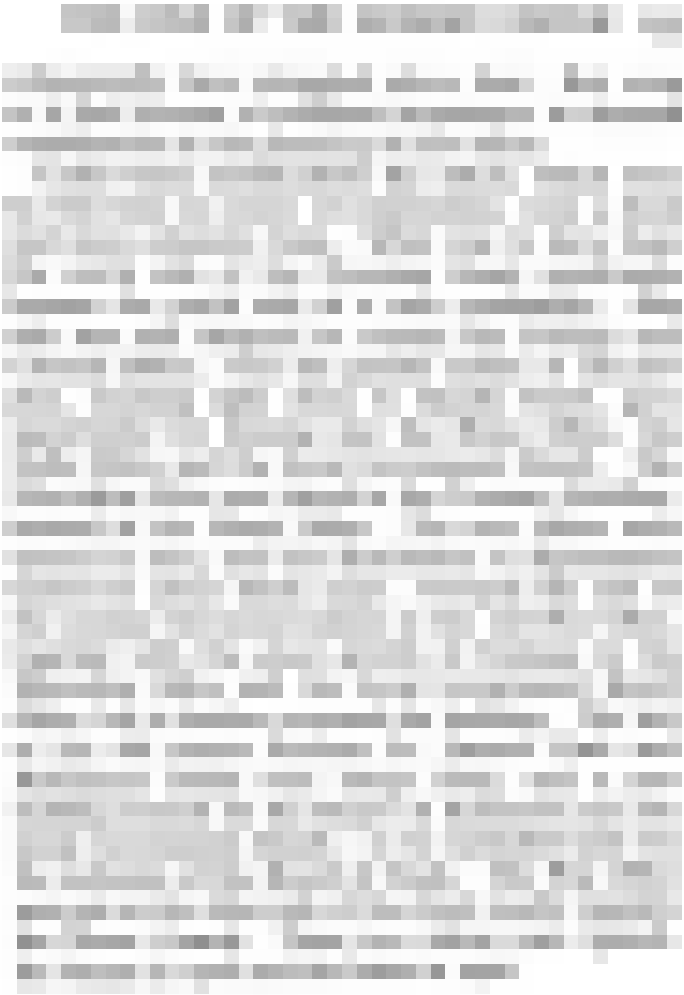
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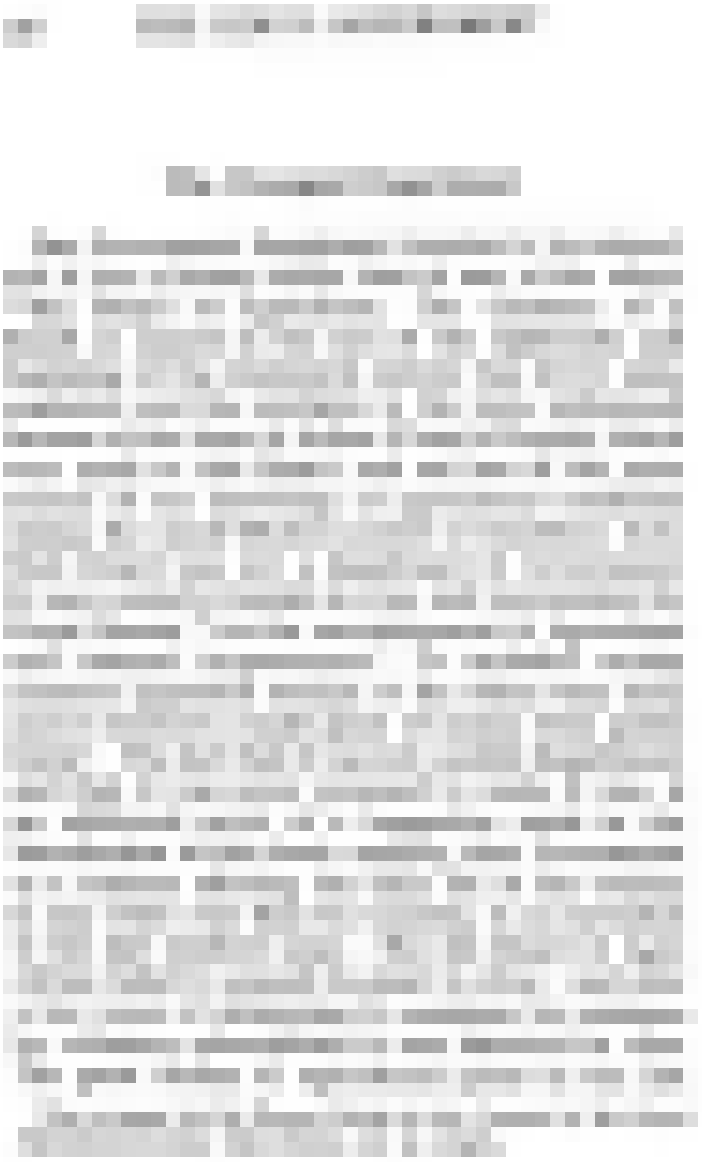
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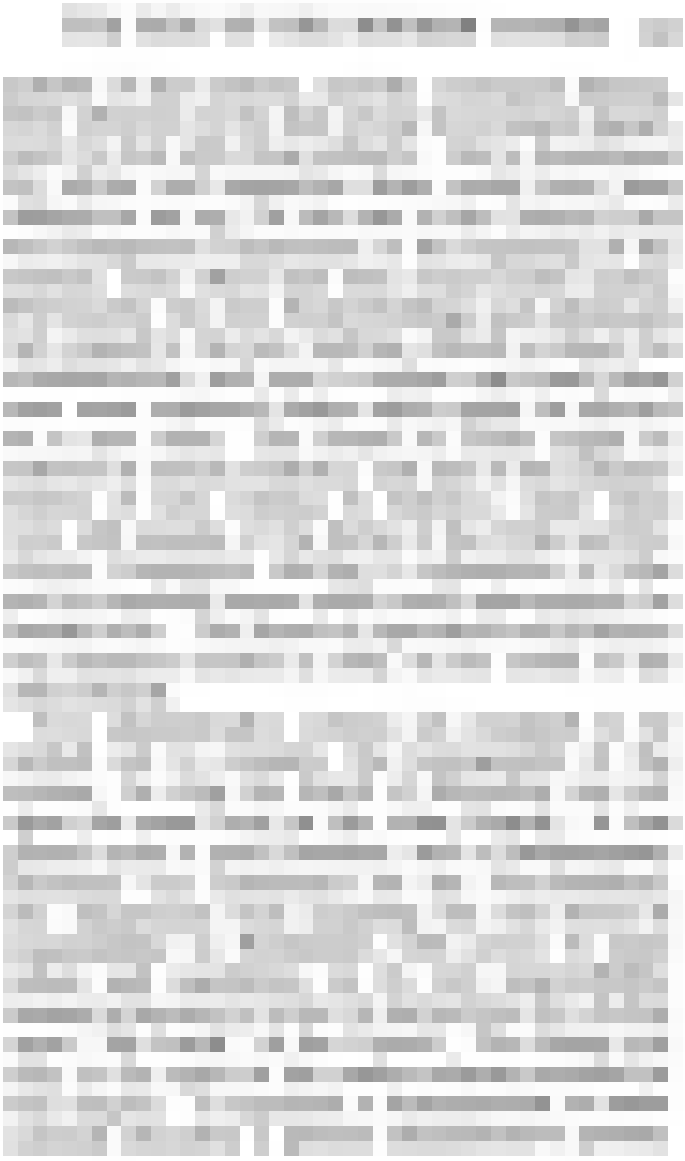
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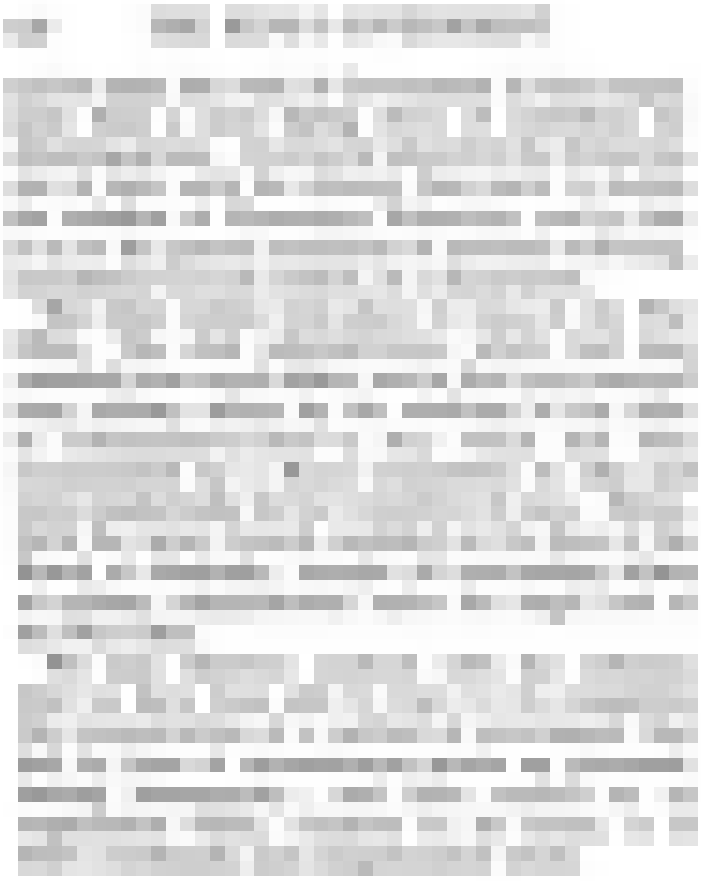
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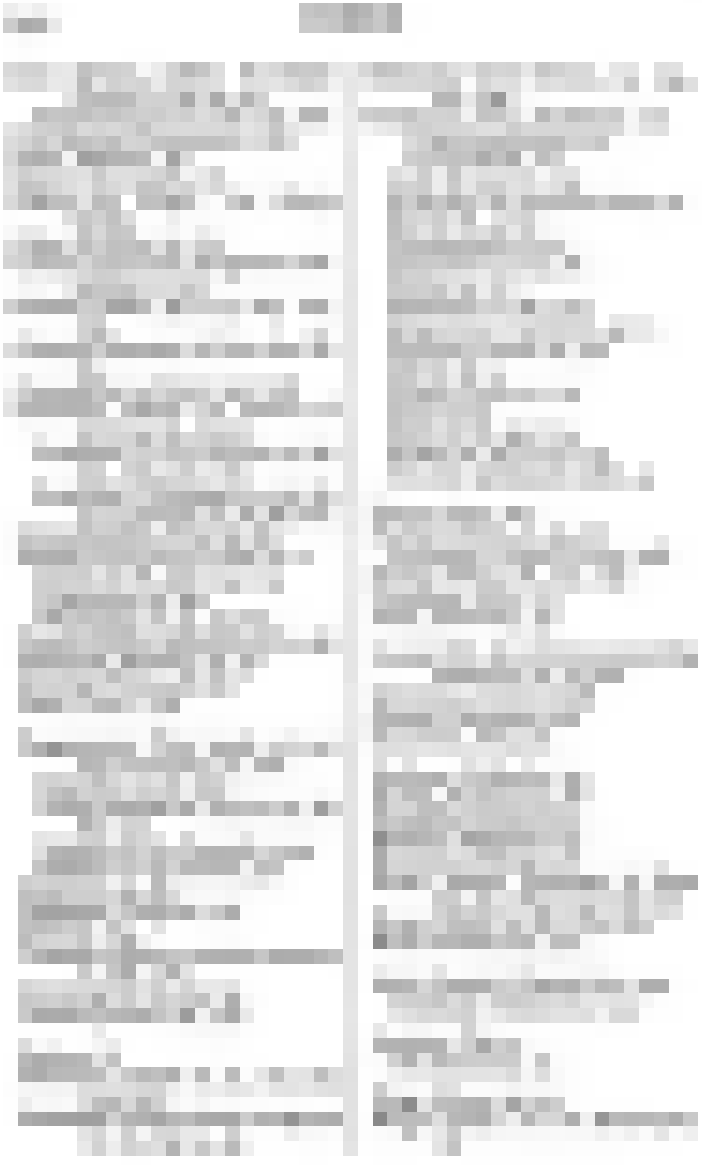
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